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1769

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A N  
I N Q U I R Y  
I N T O T H E  
B E A U T I E S O F P A I N T I N G ;  
A N D I N T O T H E  
M E R I T S  
O F T H E M O S T  
C E L E B R A T E D P A I N T E R S ,  
A N C I E N T a n d M O D E R N .

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By DANIEL WEBB, Esq.

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The SECOND EDITION.

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Οἷς μὴ ἀσπάζεται τὴν ζωγραφίαν, ἀδίκει τὴν ἀληθείαν,  
ἀδίκει δὲ καὶ σέβειαν ἱστορίας εἰς ποιητὰς ἢ καὶ, Φορὰ γὰρ ἰσὺν  
ἀμφοῖν εἰς τὰ τῶν ἡρώων εἶδη, καὶ ἔργα· —————

Philostratus in exord. Iconum.

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L O N D O N ,  
Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in *Pall-mall*.  
MDCCLXI.

TO THE

Reverend Mr. SPENCE

SIR,

THE most accurate observer  
of the beauties of nature,  
must be the best judge of their imi-  
tations; and the same elegance of  
imagination which forms the paint-  
er, must enlighten the critic. It  
was natural for me, under this per-  
suasion, to address my observa-  
tions on Painting to the author of

CRITIC.

How ingenious are men in co-  
llouring their passions! thus have I  
heightened self-love into a love of  
justice: For, what could be more  
A 2

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advantageous to me, than to have it known, that Mr. SPENCE approves me as a writer, and acknowledges me as a friend? What success I may have in the former character, must depend on futurity; but I am in possession of all the credit of the latter, while you permit me to declare, in this publick manner,

That I am, REVEREND SIR,

*with the truest respect,*

*your most obliged,*

*most obedient,*

*and most humble servant,*

DANIEL WEBB.

## P R E F A C E.

**I**F we consider the ambition most men have to be thought judges of Painting, and the ease with which they might really become so, it will appear strange, that so few should be found, who have any clear or determined ideas of this art. To account for this, and to point out those errors which have been the causes of it, is the design of this Preface; after which, I propose, by the following work, to free this subject from its supposed

A 3

difficulties;



difficulties; and to throw such lights on the beauties and advantages of this amiable art, as may both recommend the study, and facilitate the knowledge of it.

I AM sensible, that, among my readers, there will be some, whose excellent taste and clear judgment must place them much above my instructions; from these I hope for indulgence. The persons for whom I write, are our young travellers, who set out with much eagerness, and little preparation; and who, for want of some governing objects to determine their course, must continually wander, misled by ignorant guides, or bewildered by a multiplicity of directions. The first error, I have  
taken



## P R E F A C E, vii

taken notice of, is, the extreme eagerness, with which they run through the galleries and churches; *nimum vident, nec tamen totum*. . . A few good pictures, well considered, at such intervals, as to give full time to range and determine the ideas which they excite, would in the end turn to a much better account.

THE second error; is, the habit of estimating pictures by the general reputation of the painters; a rule, of all others, the most productive of ignorance and confusion. For example; Dominichino may, at times, be ranked with Raphael; at times, he is little superior to Giotto. And we often find, that the best works of the middling artists, excell the middling works of the  
A 4
best.

best. If then, we are guided wholly by the prejudice of names, we no longer trust to our own senses; we must acknowledge merit which we do not see, and undervalue that which we do; distressed between authority and conviction, we are disgusted with the difficulties of an art, which is, perhaps, of all others the most easily understood. For, that composition must be defective, which cannot, to a careful observer, point out its own tendency; and those expressions must be either weak or false, which do not, in some degree, mark the interest of each actor in the drama. In nature, we readily conceive the variety and force of characters; why should we not do so in Painting? What difficulty

# P R E F A C E. ix

culty can there be in distinguishing, whether the airs of the heads be mean or noble; the style of design, confined, charged, or elegant; whether the proportions be just or unequal; the carnations, cold or animated? If the colours in a picture be happily disposed, the general effect will be pleasing; and in proportion to the force of the clear obscure, the figures and objects will be flat or projecting, or, in other words, more or less like nature. If we consider these points without prejudice, it will, I think, appear, that of all the arts, Painting is the most natural both in its means and effects. It is the most direct and immediate address to the senses: and this must be the reason, that the best writers



ters of antiquity, in treating of other arts, so frequently borrow their examples and illustrations from this. When I thus make light of the difficulties of Painting, I must be understood to speak of its effects, not of the practice; and yet, even as to this, there are ten painters who have excelled in the mechanick part, for one who has excelled in the ideal. So that the scarcity of good pictures, arises not from a difficulty of execution, but from a poverty of invention. Hence it is, that painters of an inferior class; have, in their happier hours, struck out some excellent pictures; and some again are seldom successful, except when they work on the ideas of others: Andrea Sacchi is an example of the first, and Dominichino

# P R E F A C E. xi

nichino of the second. But I am straying from the design of this Preface, which was, to point out to the younger part of my readers those errors, which tend most to defeat their knowledge of Painting. I have already named two, the third is, the hasty ambition of distinguishing the several masters. With many, this precedes and often holds the place of all other knowledge; and yet, I will venture to affirm, that where this does not spring from a nice discernment of the beauties or imperfections of the picture before us, and those too turning chiefly on the composition and expressions, it is an idle art, more useful to a picture-merchant, than becoming a man of taste. It cannot be denied, that a sameness of manner in  
treating

treating various subjects, is a weakness; it is a want of variety, both in the mechanick, and ideal: Yet it is by this very weakness, or some insignificant particularities in the colouring, shading, attitudes, or draperies, that we so readily distinguish the several hands. It may be a check on this affectation, to observe, that among the infinity of painters, there are not, perhaps, a dozen, who are worth studying: It is not by little circumstances, that we know a Raphael or Correggio: Their superior talents are their distinctions. Women of ordinary forms, are marked by the jewels on their necks, or the colours of their clothes; but a D——s of G——n is singled out by a pre-eminence in beauty. There is a fourth error which I would fain discredit,



# P R E F A C E. xiii

and then I shall have done with this unpleasing task: I have observed many to look at pictures, with no other view, than to shew their accuteness in detecting little errors in drawing, or lapses of the pencil; these do not study Painting to become knowing, but to appear so. But let them reflect, that there is more true taste, in drawing forth one latent beauty, than in observing a hundred obvious imperfections: The first proves, that our spirit co-operates with that of the artist; the second shews nothing more, than, that we have eyes, and that we use them to very little purpose. If these errors appear in the same light to my reader, that they do to me, he will see the necessity there was, for some better plan than that which

we

we have hitherto followed in the study of Painting. This is what I propose by the Essay which I here offer to the publick. I shall use no art, however customary it may be on these occasions, to prepare the judgment, or conciliate the good opinion of my readers: One thing only it may be necessary to excuse; I have been forced, in some measure, to take certain liberties of style, which, though common in other languages, have not yet been received into ours. Thus I have used the MECHANICK, and IDEAL of an art, instead of the mechanick, or ideal part of an art; as likewise CLEARS and OBSCURES, for clear and obscure colours. I have borrowed the word NUD from the French; SBOZZO from the Italian; and

and have translated the CHIAROSCURO of the latter into the clear obscure. These are little licences, unavoidable, in treating of an art, which has not as yet been thoroughly naturalized; and I even wish, that they may not be overlooked, in the number of less excusable defects.

CON-



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DIALOGUE

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## DIALOGUE I.

### *General Plan of the WORK.*

B. **W**HEN you advanced the other day, in a circle of virtuoso's, that the ancients were, in painting, as in all the other polite arts, equal, if not superior, to the moderns; your assertion was received with an universal dislike. However different my sentiments were from yours at the time, I was yet persuaded, that you would not have given into so singular an opinion, without having good reasons to support it. I mentioned to you then my doubts, and you was so good as to promise me you would remove them.

B

A. I.

*A.* I was not at all surpris'd at the dissatisfaction you remarked in those gentlemen; it is unpleasing to have an opinion brought into doubt, which we have looked upon all our lives as indisputable. You shall now be a judge of the grounds I had for my assertion. Had we no other object in view, but merely to determine the different merits of the artists, it would hardly be worth the labour; but, by examining the testimonies which we shall draw from the writings of the ancients, and comparing their ideas with the paintings of the moderns, we shall enlarge our conceptions, and improve our knowledge of the art itself.

*B.* THIS prospect which you have opened upon me, gives me a singular pleasure; for, after having read, with the utmost attention, the several authors on this subject, I cannot say, that I have received from them the instruction I expected.

*A.* THIS



A. THIS does not proceed from a want of capacity in them, but from a defect in their plans : they are, as you know, biographers ; and, as the persons whose lives they write, are all of one profession, the continued repetition of the same thoughts, and of the same technical terms, tire and distract the reader. There is another objection to their manner of writing ; their ideas, however just, are so scattered through the different parts of their works, that they are not easily reducible to any system. In the exposition of an art, as in the distribution of a picture, a loose dispersion of the objects, confounds both the eye and the understanding. But, these writers are subject to a still greater disadvantage ; for, as the painters whose talents they describe, if we except a very few, excelled much more in the mechanick, than in the ideal part of painting, it throws the force of their observations on that point, with which

4      *General Plan of the Work.*      DIAL. I.

we, who are but observers of the art, have the least to do.

B. THOUGH I understand very well the terms mechanick and ideal, in their general acception, yet, I wish you would explain them, in their particular relation to the subject before us.

A. WE may consider the imitative arts in two points of view; 1st, As imitations of such objects as are actually before the eye; 2dly, As representations of those images which are formed by the fancy. The first, is the mechanick or executive part of the art; the second, the ideal or inventive. [a] Tully has justly distinguished those

[a] Nec verò ille artifex, quum faceret Iovis formam aut Minervæ, contemplabatur aliquem è quo similitudinem duceret; sed ipse in mente insidebat specie pulchritudinis eximia quædam, quam intuens, in eaque delixus, ad illius similitudinem artem et manum dirigebat. In Bruto.

parts,

DIAL. I. *General Plan of the Work.* 5

parts, when he observes, that the Jupiter of Phidias was not drawn from any pattern in nature, but from that idea of unexampl'd beauty, which the artist had formed in his mind. The great difference, observed among painters of any name, arises from their different excellencies in these two parts: those, whose chief merit is in the mechanick, will, like the Dutch-painters, be servile copiers of the works of nature; but those, who give wholly into the ideal, without perfecting themselves in the mechanick, will produce [b] *sbozzo's*, not pictures: it is evident then, that the perfection of the art consists in an union of these two parts. Of all the moderns, Raphael seems to have come the nearest to this point. The next to him is, perhaps, Correggio. I have said *perhaps*, because, though there is no great variety in his

[b] The rough draught of a picture.



ideas, yet are they sometimes so happy, attended with such grace, and executed with such truth, that, as there is no one artist, whose paintings we see with more pleasure, so is there no one, whose impressions we receive more warmly, or remember longer; and this last is the test of perfect painting. But before I enter further into our subject, it may not be improper, to lay before you the method I propose to observe. First then, we will examine our capacity to judge of the imitative arts; to determine which, we must previously fix the limits between taste and science. In the next place, we may consider the true value of these arts, which must be estimated, by their antiquity, their degree of credit with every polite nation, and, above all, by their usefulness to society. I shall then divide painting, which is our principal object, into its four leading branches, namely, design, colouring, clear obscure, and composition. Concerning each  
of

DIAL. I. *General Plan of the Work.* 7

of these, I shall endeavour to point out its different beauties and ends; how far the ancients seem to have attained those ends; and of course, what light they must stand in, on a comparison with the moderns. One satisfaction you will have in this progress, that, almost every step we take, will be on classick ground; and, as all the testimonies I use, or lights I borrow, are from the best writers of antiquity, the vivacity and good sense in their remarks will at once entertain, and guide us in our pursuit. As the day is now too far spent to enter upon our subject, to-morrow, if you please, we will begin; and dedicate a morning to each of the divisions, in the order I just now stated them.

## D I A L O G U E II.

*Of our Capacity to judge of PAINTING.*

[c] **T**HE learned, says Quintilian, know the principles of an art, the illiterate its effects. He has, in those words, fixed the boundaries between taste and science. Were I to define the former, I should say, [d] that taste was a facility in the mind

[c] Docti rationem artis intelligunt, indocti voluptionem. Lib. ix. 4.

[d] Many writers have opposed judgment to taste, as if they were distinct faculties of the mind; but this must be a mistake: The source of taste is feeling, so is it of judgment, which is nothing more than this same sensibility, improved by the study of its proper objects, and brought to a just point of certainty and correctness. Thus it is clear, that these are but different degrees of the same faculty, and that they are exercised wholly on our own ideas; but, science is the remembrance or assemblage of the ideas of others;

to



DIAL. II. *Our Capacity to judge, &c.* 9

to be moved by what is excellent in an art; it is a feeling of the truth. But, science is to be informed of that truth, and of the means by which its effects are produced. It is easy to conceive, that, different as these principles may be in their setting out, they must often unite in their decisions: This agreement will occasion their being mistaken one for the other, which is the case, when it is affirmed, that no one but an artist can form a right judgment of sculpture or painting. This maxim may hold indeed with respect to the mechanick of an art, but not at all as to its effects; the evidence and force of which, are what determine both the value of the art, and merit of the artist. What [e] Tully observes of an excellent

and hence it sometimes happens, that men the most remarkable for this kind of knowledge, are not equally so, for their sensibility.

\* [e] Id enim ipsum est summi oratoris, summum oratorem populo videri. In Bruto.

orator,

orator, may as justly be said of an excellent painter; his superiority will be evident even to the least intelligent judges. But neither authority nor argument give a weight to our opinions, touching any art we treat of, equal to the illustrations and examples which they lend each other. Happily, [*f*] the near affinity that is observed between the polite arts, they being indeed all but different means of addressing the same passions, makes this, at once, the most effectual and ready method of conveying our ideas. I find in Dionysius Halicarnassæus an observation on musick much to my purpose. [*g*] “I

[*f*] *Omnes artes, quæ ad humanitatem pertinent, habent quoddam commune vinculum, et quasi cognatione inter se continentur. Cic. pro Archia poëta.*

[*g*] Εγώγε και εν τοις πολυανθρωποτατοις θεατροις, ᾧ συμπληροὶ παντοδαποὺς και αμυστοὺς οχλοὺς, εἰδυῖα καὶ λαμβάνειν, ὡς φυσικῇ τις ἐστὶν ἀπάντων ἡμῶν οἰκειότης πρὸς ευμελεῖαν τε και ευρυθμίαν· Κιθαριστην τε ἀγαθὸν σφοδρὰ εὐδεκτημένην ἰδῶ

have

“ have learned,” says he, “ in theatres fill-  
 “ ed with a promiscuous and illiterate  
 “ crowd, what a kind of natural corres-  
 “ pondence we all have with melody,  
 “ and the agreement of sounds: Having  
 “ known the most admired and able mu-  
 “ sician to be hissed by the whole multi-  
 “ tude, when he has struck a single string  
 “ out of tune, to the disturbance of har-  
 “ mony; yet, put this same instrument  
 “ into the hands of one of those simple-  
 “ tons, with orders to express that note,  
 “ which he would exact from the artist,  
 “ he cannot do it. Whence is this? The  
 “ one is the effect of science, the lot but  
 “ of a few; the other of feeling, which

ὁροδοκίαια ὑπο τῆ πλῆθους, ὅτι μίαν χορδὴν ἀσυμφωνον ἐκ-  
 ῆρσε, καὶ ἐφθάρη το μέλος· καίτοι εἰς κελεύσει τοῦ ιδιωτοῦ  
 τῶν τι ἂν ἐνεκαλεῖ τοῖς τεχνίταις ὡς ἡμαρτημένων, αὐτοῦ  
 ποιῆσαι λαβούνα τα ὄργανα, ἢ ἀν δυνάϊο. τι δὴ ποτε; ὅτι  
 σὺτο μὲν ἐπιστήμης ἐστίν, ἥς ὅ πάντες μελεληφάμεν· ἐκεῖνο δὲ  
 πάθος, ὃ πασὶν ἀπεδωκεν ἡ φύσις. Dion. Halicarn. De  
 struct. orat. sect. xi.

“ nature

“ nature has bestowed on all.” This applies itself to our present subject: The eye has its principle of correspondence with what is just, beautiful, and elegant: It acquires, like the ear, an [*b*] habitual delicacy; and answers, with the same fidelity and precision, to the finest impressions: Versed in the works of the best painters, it soon learns to distinguish true expressions from false, and grace from affectation; quickened by exercise, and confirmed by comparison, it outstrips reasoning; and feels in an instant that truth, which the other develops by degrees.

*B.* You have been describing, what Tully calls a learned, and we, I think, may term a chaste eye. But, do you not, in this process, make the growth of taste

[*b*] *Consuetudo oculorum.* Cic. lib. iv. Acad. quest.



to be little more than a sensitive vegetation, withdrawing it wholly from its dependency on science?

*A.* LET us observe its advances in poetry, as we have before in musick: This too, will be the more decisive, as poetry is an union of the two powers of musick and picture. In this, the imagination, on its first setting out, ever prefers extravagance to justness, or false beauties to true; it kindles at the flashes of Claudian; and flutters at the points of Statius; this is its childhood. As it grows in vigour, it refines in feeling; till, superior to its first attractions, it rests on the tender pathetick of Virgil; or the manly spirit of Lucretius. Exactly parallel to this, is the progress of the eye in painting; its first affections are always ill placed: it is enamoured with the splendid

did impositions of Rubens, or the [i] theatrical grace of Guido; this lasts not long; it grows chaste in its pursuit; and flighting those false beauties, dwells on the native and mellow tints of Titian; on the unforced attitudes, and elegant simplicity of Raphael. Was this change, in both cases, the result of reasoning, or produced by a

[i] The grace of Guido is rather technical than ideal; by the first is meant a certain flow of Contour, invariably applied to every character, and on every occasion. Thus the daughter of Herodias receives the head of St. John, with the studied dignity of an actress; and the victorious St. Michael, treads on the body of his antagonist, with all the precision of a dancing master. By an ideal grace, I understand that particular image, which in the instant strikes a polite imagination, as peculiar to the action and character before it—Of this the *Sancta Cecilia* of Raphael, and the *Magdalen* in the *St. Jerome* of Coreggio, are the happiest examples: The gracefulness in these figures is not only proper to their characters, but gives a singular force and beauty to the expression. It was from this happiness, that the *venustas* of Apelles became proverbial; as, among us, any action that is singularly graceful, is termed *Correggiesque*.

growing knowledge of the rules of each art, we should mark its advances; the contrary of which is almost ever the case; so that we are often surpris'd at this alteration in ourselves, and wonder, that the ideas and objects which affected us so warmly at first, should, in a short course of time, act so coldly upon us: Nay, some men there are, and those too very capable of judging in other matters, who never rise to this change; but continue, to the last, under the influence of the same boyish and wanton imagination.

*B.* T H E greatest difficulty in your system, would be, to deduce the different degrees, as well as diversity of our tastes, from this same universal principle of feeling.

*A.* T H E first, I should think, may be accounted for, from the different proportions of that sensibility, as bestowed on us  
by

by nature, or improved by ourselves: The second, from the diversity in our imaginations, in the direction given to them by education, and the constitutional or temporary flow of the animal spirits. But, as this is an inquiry quite beyond my reach, I shall leave it to those, who can trace the progress of our ideas; and can determine, and account for the various influences of outward objects on our senses. Instead of losing our time in such endless disquisitions, let us found our knowledge on facts; and pass from them to natural and useful conclusions. “The [k] Lacedæmonians,” says Athenæus, “are nowhere represented as being themselves musicians; yet, the purity of their taste in this art, is universally acknowledged: they having, at three different times,

[k] Λακεδαιμόνιοι, εἰ μὲν ἐμάνθανον τὴν μουσικὴν, ὅθεν λέγουσιν ὅτι διέκρινεν δύνασθαι καλῶς τὴν τέχνην, ὁμολογεῖται. παρ’ αὐτῶν γὰρ φασὶ τρεῖς ἡδὴ σισωκεῖσθαι διαφθειρομένην αὐτὴν. Athenæus, lib. xiii. Deipnosoph. c. 6,

when



“ when it was corrupted and lost, restored  
 “ and preserved it.” The following ob-  
 servation by Tully, at the same time that  
 it illustrates, receives authority from this  
 fact.—“ All [1] men, by a kind of tacit  
 “ feeling, without art or science, distin-  
 “ guish, in both cases, what is right from  
 “ what is wrong; and, as they evidently do  
 “ so in painting and sculpture, so, &c. &c.  
 And again: “ It is wonderful, says he, that,  
 “ seeing the difference is so great between  
 “ the knowing and the ignorant, in the  
 “ practice of an art, that the difference  
 “ should be so far from great, in their  
 “ judgments concerning it.”

[1] Omnes enim tacito quodam sensu, sine ulla  
 arte aut ratione, quæ sint in artibus ac rationibus rec-  
 ta ac parva dijudicant; idque cum faciunt in picturis  
 et in signis, &c. &c.

Mirabile est, cum plurimum in faciendo intersit in-  
 ter doctum et rudem, quam non multum differat in  
 judicando. De Oratore, lib. iii.

*B.* You have, I think, fully established the principle you contend for; namely, that we have all within us the seeds of taste, and are capable, if we exercise our powers, of improving them into a sufficient knowledge of the polite arts. I am persuaded, that nothing is a greater hinderance to our advances in any art, than the high opinion we form of the judgment of its professors, and the proportionable diffidence of our own. I have rarely met with an artist, who was not an implicit admirer of some particular school, or a slave to some favourite manner. They seldom, like gentlemen and scholars, rise to an unprejudiced and liberal contemplation of true beauty. The difficulties they find in the practice of their art, tie them down to the mechanick: at the same time, that self-love and vanity lead them into an admiration of  
those

DIAL. II.      *of* PAINTING.      19

those strokes of the pencil, which come the nearest to their own. I knew a painter at Rome, a man of sense too, who talked much more of Jacinto Brandi, than he did either of Correggio or Raphael.

## D I A L O G U E III.

*Of the Antiquity and Usefulness of*  
PAINTING.

THOUGH the antiquity of an art is not that which should determine its value, yet, it creates a respect, and increases, if I may be allowed the expression, its consequence with us, when we know it to have been the study and pursuit of the earliest ages. The connection that prevails between the polite arts, extends not only to a similitude in their operations and effects, it marks likewise a kind of sister-hood in their origin: For, as the different branches of the same art are ever observed to flourish together; so, the power of drawing men to our ends by flattering their imaginations, or interesting their passions be-  
ing



ing exerted in any one mode, we may reasonably promise ourselves the invention of the rest. Hence we must always expect to see painting, eloquence, and sculpture advancing like the Graces, hand in hand, to perfection: They should, like the glories of the rainbow, shine forth at once in a friendly splendor; and, to continue the image, they should too, like those, fade and go out in an immediate succession: — Accordingly this has been in all times the case. “ [m] For who, says an  
 “ ancient writer, can sufficiently wonder,  
 “ that the most eminent geniuses in every  
 “ profession, should appear in the same  
 “ degrees of excellence, and at the same  
 “ critical point of time? ” It had been so in the ages of Alexander the Great, and

[n] Quis enim abunde mirari potest, quod eminentissima cujusque professionis ingenia, in eandem formam, et in idem arctati temporis congruant spatium? Vell. Pat. Hist. lib. i. c. 16.

Augustus; and was so afterwards, in those of Leo X, and Lewis XIV. If, therefore, that which has been invariable in the historical ages, may, by a just analogy, be extended to those which preceded them, I should have no more difficulty in pronouncing, that there were painters before the time of Homer, than Tully had in affirming, that there were poets. Though the reason of things may be sufficient to establish this opinion; yet, we have still surer grounds to rest on: Sculpture and painting must, from their nature, be inseparable, as design is the parent of both. That the first of these existed before Homer, we can have no doubt, when we read his description of the shield of Achilles; the composition of which would do honour to a Fiammingo, or Algardi. He says, in one place, that the earth grew dark under the plow. This shows, that they then  
knew

knew the [*n*] art of colouring metals by fire, or by their mixtures; this is an evident imitation of painting: it is, beside, a refinement; and speaks the art, not in its infancy, but at full growth. If we allow then in this case, the same space of time, to bring it from its birth to its perfection, which every other art, though of less compass than this, has taken, we shall find it in being at the time of the [*o*] Trojan war. I should not be so particular in tracing the origin of sculpture, and consequently of painting, to this era, were it not, that

[*n*] This art was lost in the time of Pliny. Quondam æs confusum auro argentoque miscebatur, et tamen ars pretiosior erat: Nunc incertum est, pejor hæc sit, an materia; mirumque cum ad infinitum operum pretia creverint, ars extincta est. Lib. xxxiv. c. 2.

[*o*] Servius, ad ver. 392, 393. *Æneid.* ii. has the following note: Scutis Græcorum, Neptunus; Trojanorum, fuit Minerva depicta. And again, ad ver. 784. *Æneid.* x. Lino tegebantur scuta, ut possent inherere picturæ.

Pliny confidently affirms, that the latter did not exist in those times; for which, however, he gives no reason, any more than he does, for treating as ridiculous the assertion of the Egyptians, that they practised painting, many thousand years before it was known in Greece. Whoever consults [p] Tacitus will find, that the Egyptians knew design, and sculptured marble, long before they had the knowledge of letters; which, Cadmus, a descendant of theirs, many ages after, introduced into Greece.

B. WHAT you have offered concerning the Egyptians, is confirmed by a later and undoubted example. When the Spaniards first arrived in America, the

[p] Primi per figuras animalium Ægyptii sensus mentis effingebant, et antiquissima monumenta memoriæ humanæ impressa faxis cernuntur. *Annal. lib. xi. cap. 14.*



news was sent to the Emperor in painted expreffes, they not having at that time the ufe of letters.

*A.* As it is evident that paint bears the immediate ftamp, and very image of our conceptions, [*q*] fo it was natural, that men fhould fooner hit on this method of representing their thoughts, than by letters, which have no connection with, or refemblance to the ideas they ftand for: From whence, no lefs than from the authority of hiftory, it has been juftly concluded, that writing is of a much later invention than painting. But that which brought the antiquity of the latter fo much

[*q*] It is to be obferved, that, in the Greek tongue, the fame word (*γραφειν*) fignifies to paint, or to write; which is eafily accounted for, if we fuppofe that, like the Egyptians, they firft explained their thoughts by paint: So that, afterwards, when letters were difcovered, though they changed the manner, they continued the term.

into

into doubt, was the vanity of the Greeks. Piqued that any other nation should have the honour of its invention, they dated its origin from its first appearance among themselves ; they tell us of a certain maid, who to have some present image of her lover, who was about to leave her, [r] drew the out-lines of his shadow on a wall.

*B.* IT was prettily imagined however, to make the most amiable of all our passions give birth to the most pleasing of all arts.

*A.* Pliny who mentions this, objects to the Greeks their inconsistency, and want of accuracy. The first painter they name, lived in the nintieth olympiad ; upon which

[r] Hence the art itself was by the Greeks termed Σκιαγραφία and in the Latin, *Adumbrare* and *Pingere* are synonymous.

he

he observes, that Candaules, “ a king  
 “ of Lydia, who died in the eighteenth,  
 “ gave an immense price for a picture  
 “ by Bularchus ; to which he adds, [s]  
 “ it is manifest, that the art was even  
 “ then in its full beauty and perfection ;  
 “ which, if we are forced to allow, it  
 “ necessarily follows, that its beginnings  
 “ must have been much more ancient.”

THE *Picturæ Ardeæ*, so much praised by Pliny, were, as he tells us, painted before the foundation of Rome ; as were the *Atalanta* and *Helena* at *Lanuvium*, by the same hand ; each of excellent beauty. This is a second proof, that painting was at a high point of perfection before the institution of the olympiads. Having thus established the reputation of

[s] Manifestâ jam tum claritate artis atque absolute ; quod si recipi necesse est, simul apparet multò vetustiora principia esse. Lib. xxxv.

our

our art, so far as depends on its antiquity; I shall come to consider it in a light much more to its advantage, I mean its usefulness to society. I shall enlarge the more on this, as we do not seem to be sufficiently acquainted with it in this character.

WHEN Plato banished poetry from his republick, it is to be wondered he did not extend his severity to painting and sculpture: It is probable, he did not so well know the powers of these arts, or how far their merit entitled them to his persecution. It should seem that legislators, for the most part, divide men into two extremes; to those of the finer temper, they propose the good of society, and beauty of virtue, as sufficient motives to action: But the vulgar and sordid natures are, by their leading passions, as pride,  
fear



DIAL. III. *Usefulness of PAINTING:* . 29

fear and hope, to be compelled into virtue. Such systems as these may produce a Spartan severity, or Roman patriotism, but never an Athenian politeness. To effect this, the softer passions, and even elegant habitudes are to be employed: These only can humanize the mind, and temper it into a sensibility of the slightest impressions, and most exquisite feelings. Hence spring attention, [*t*] civility, the fine disguises of our own passions, and insinuating address to those of others; these fashion themselves into a system of politeness; society becomes amiable, as well as good, and we have at last, the best incitements to

[*t*] In the ancient mythology, the *Xαρίτες* or Graces were made to preside over courtesy, and outward charms: The assigning them this double province, was happily imagined; for civility, or the desire to please, naturally produces a gracefulness of action; and spreads over our persons that *venustas*, which is the completion of exterior beauty.

the

the practice of virtue, in the [u] agreeableness of its objects.

B. THUS, the first motives may be said to act like the pressure of the heart or current of the blood; their operations are evident: But the latter, of a more refined nature, like the animal spirits, though they work unperceived, give life and movement to well ordered societies.

A. OVID takes notice of the utility, as well as the pleasure we receive from an encouragement of the polite arts [x].

*Each pleasing art lends softness to the mind,  
And, with our studies, are our lives refin'd.*

[u] This was well understood by Confucius, the Chinese legislator; who ranks civility with gratitude, in the class of cardinal virtues.

[x] Scilicet ingenium placida mollitur ab arte,  
Et studio mores convenienter eunt.

Lib. iii. de Arte.

And

And Petronius views their effects in a moral light, observing, [y] that violent passions dwell in the rude, but take no hold of a cultivated mind.—Were we then to consider the arts merely as objects of elegant speculation, or as the means of polishing and softening our manners, we could not prize them too highly; but their effects are much more extensive. The powers of eloquence and musick are universally acknowledged; so would be those of paint were they as universally exercised. The Athenians passed a law, that none who were not of a liberal birth, should practise in this art: They could not better show the sense they had of its power than in the care they took of its direction. They knew the dominion it had over our passions, and hence were careful to lodge it in the safest hands. Agreeable to this idea, the Greek

[y] Similiter in pectoribus ira confidit, feras quidem mentes obsidet, erudititas prælabitur. In Satyricon writers

writers often speak of the drama of a painter, of the moral of painting; expressions which mark, that they considered this art, as on a level, and co-operating with poetry. One of the gravest and most judicious of the Romans viewed it in the same light. [z] Picture, says Quintilian, a silent and uniform address, yet penetrates so deeply into our inmost affections, that it seems often to exceed even the powers of eloquence. We cannot doubt the sincerity of this decision, if we consider the character of the person from whom it comes. Cicero was equally sensible of the powers of the pencil, and often sets them in competition with those of his favourite art. Their effects are sometimes wonderful. It is said, that Alexander trembled and grew pale, on seeing a picture of Palamedes be-

[z] *Pictura, tacens opus et habitus semper ejusdem, sic in intimos penetrat affectus, ut ipsam vim dicendi nonnunquam superare videatur.*

trayed



DIAL. III. *Usefulness of PAINTING.* 33

trayed to death by his friends; it bringing to his mind a stinging remembrance of his treatment of Aristonicus. Portia could bear with an unshaken constancy her last separation from Brutus; but when she saw, some hours after, a picture of the parting of Hector and Andromache, she burst into a flood of tears: Full as seemed her sorrow, the painter suggested new ideas of grief, or impress'd more strongly her own. I have somewhere met with a pretty story of an Athenian courtesan, who, in the midst of a riotous banquet with her lovers, accidentally cast her eye on the portrait of a philosopher, that hung opposite to her seat; the happy character of temperance and virtue, struck her with so lively an image of her own unworthiness, that she instantly quitted her room; and retiring home, became ever after an example of temperance, as she had been before of debauchery. You might tax me with doing injustice to

D

the

the present times, were I to draw all my proofs from the ancient; I appeal, therefore, to yourself, who have had an opportunity to prove it, whether you could look on the death of Germanicus, as painted by Poussin, without feeling a generous indignation at the cruelty of his oppressor, and an equal compassion for unhappy virtue. The representation of a plague, by the same author, melts the soul into a tender participation of human miseries: These impressions end not here; they give a turn to the mind advantageous to society; every argument of sorrow, every object of distress, renews the same soft vibrations, and quickens us to acts of humanity and benevolence.

*B.* By what fatality has it been, that a nation, eminent for its productions in poetry and eloquence, capable of the greatest efforts of genius, and blest with the

DIAL.III. *Usefulness of PAINTING.* 35

happiest sensibility, should, for so many ages, with a kind of wilful and Gothic rudeness, have withstood the allurements of this divine art ?

A. THE extraordinary passion which the English have for portraits, must ever prevent the rise of history painting among us : The liberal, like the mechanick arts, depend wholly on the encouragement they meet with.

B. IT should seem, that we inherit our taste in painting from our British ancestors ; Propertius has given a picture of them, which, with the smallest allowance, might pass for our own. [a]

*Like the daub'd Briton now you strike the eye,  
And look more trifling in a borrow'd die.*

[a] Nunc etiam infectos demens imitare Britannos,  
Ludis et externo tincta nitore caput.

Lib. ii. Eleg. 18.

It is, you see, the same spirit, a little varied in its operations.

A. YOUR countrymen will not thank you for having revived this branch of their inheritance. But, to resume our subject; it is certain, that the love of this art has been considered in every civilized nation, not only as a proof of their politeness, but even as the test of their humanity. Virgil, who seldom hazards his reflections, has given us a singular instance of his judgment on this point. Æneas, on his landing in Africk, has many fears touching the temper and manners of the Africans; but he no sooner sees the walls of their temple covered with paintings, than, secure of a reception, he cries out in a transport to his friend [b] :

[b] Sunt lacrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.  
Solve metum. *Æneid. i.*

*Here*



*Here others ills are felt, the wretched here  
Are sure to meet the tribute of a tear,  
Vain were our fears.*

B. WHAT then must Æneas have thought, had he heard, that in that country, painting was taxed by the foot, or seen his helpless Penates hurried away to the custom-house?

A. YOU may expect, that, before I quit the effects of paint, I should say something of the pleasure we receive from it: But, as this is itself a passion, founded on the love of what is beautiful, and the delight we feel in having our passions moved, it is easier to affirm its existence, than to explain its nature.—It is enough therefore to observe, that this pleasure has prevailed in every age, and takes in all characters of men, from the

38      *The Antiquity and, &c.* DIAL. III.

elegant observer of beauty, down to the illiterate rustic, who, as Horace humourously expresses it, stares, *contento poplite*, at the daubings of the art, and is transported with the magick of a charcoal pencil,

D I A-

## D I A L O G U E IV.

## Of DESIGN.

A. **W**E are told by Pliny, that all the statues before the time of Dædalus, were represented stiff and motionless; with winking eyes, closed feet, and arms hanging in right lines to their sides [c]: These were the rude essays of design.

[c] Conniventibus oculis, pedibus junctis, brachiis in latera demissis, statu rigido. —The Egyptians continued to the last, even when they were masters of a perfect design, to represent their deities in the manner above described: We cannot suppose that this was owing to an ignorance of the advantages of a graceful action, but rather to their bigotted attachment to certain theological ideas. The motion they ascribed to their divinities, was neither that of walking nor flying; Milton, who has adopted their idea, describes it precisely in the following lines, —

*So saying, by the hand he took me, rais'd,  
And over fields and waters, as in air*

SMOOTH SLIDING WITHOUT STEP, *last led me up  
A woody mountain.* ———

D 4

Dædalus

Dædalus, and his immediate followers, unfolded these embarrassed figures; they threw motion into the limbs, and life into the countenance. In the progress of the art, and in abler hands, motion was fashioned into grace, and life was heightened into character. Now, too, it was, that beauty of form was no longer confined to mere imitation, which always falls short of the object imitated; to make the copy equal in its effect, it was necessary to give it some advantage over its model. The artist, therefore, observing, that nature was sparing of her perfections, and that her efforts were limited to parts, availed himself of

The Greeks who borrowed their religion, as they did their arts, from the Egyptians, followed for some time this mode of representation; till at length, (which was, perhaps, the era Pliny mentions) their aversion to every thing that was ungraceful, overcame their prejudices; and this might have been a principal reason, that in the end they so far excelled their masters.—

her



her inequality, [*d*] and drawing these scattered beauties into a more happy and compleat union, rose from an imperfect imitative, to a perfect ideal beauty. We are informed, that the painters of Greece pressed in crowds to design the bosom and breasts of Thais : Nor were the elegant proportions of Phryne less the object of their study. By this constant contemplation of the beautiful, they enriched their imagination and confirmed their taste ; from this fund they drew their systems of beauty ; and though we should consider them but as imitators as to the parts, we must allow them to have been inventors in the

[*d*] Ὅτι περ τροπον, καὶ τοῖς τὰ ἀγαλμαῖα τῆσι διαπλατ-  
τησιν, οἱ πάντες τὸ παρ' ἑκάστη καλὸν συναγαγόντες. καὶ κατὰ  
τὴν τέχνην ἐκ διαφορῶν σωματικῶν ἀθροισαίντες εἰς μιμησιν μίαν,  
καλλὸς ἐν ὕγιει καὶ ἀρίστῳ καὶ ἡρμοσμένῳ αὐτῷ αὐτῷ ἐξεργα-  
σαντο. Καὶ ἔκ αὐτοῦ εὖρος σῶμα ἀκριβὲς κατὰ ἀληθείαν ἀγαλ-  
μαῖσι ὁμοίον. Οὐ γὰρ αἱ τέχναι τὰ καλλίστα.

Max. Tyr. Differt. xxiii. ed. Lond.

compositions :

compositions. And indeed, when we reflect on the taste and judgment requisite to form these various ideas into such a wonderful agreement, we cannot set too high a value on their productions. The poets and writers of antiquity acknowledge this superiority of invented to real beauty.—

OVID thus describes Cyllarus the Centaur, [*e*] ——

*A just proportion, and a manly grace,  
Spread thro' his limbs, and kindled in his face,  
Nature for once assum'd the sculptor's part,  
And in a faultless beauty rivall'd art.——*

And Philostratus, speaking of the beauty of Neoptolemus, remarks, that it was as much inferior to that of his father Achilles, as the handsomest men are to the finest statues.

[*e*] Gratus in ore vigor: cervix, humerique, manusque,  
Pectoraque artificum laudatis proxima signis,  
Ex qua parte vir est. Metam. lib. xii.

Should

Should we still doubt of the truth or justness of the descriptions, let us observe the works which gave occasion to them. Let us contemplate the fine proportions, the style of drawing in the Laocoon and Gladiator. Let us mark the sublime of the art, in the expressive energy, the divine character of the Apollo. Let us dwell on the elegant beauties of the Venus of Medicis. These are the utmost efforts of design: It can reach no farther than a full exertion of grace, character, and beauty. We have thus traced the genius of design from its first essays to its full flight. But there is an [f] enthusiasm in every art. The Greek statuaries felt themselves straitened within the out-lines of nature; they invented new proportions, they conceived

[f] Ενθουσιασμον της τεχνης—ἔτω καὶ Φειδιαν ενθουσιασμενα δημιουργειν. Suidas.

new

new characters. The [g] Jupiter and Minerva of Phidias were subjects of astonishment in the most enlightened ages. It should seem, that the wonderful effect of these statues, proceeded from an union of the beautiful, with the great and uncommon; thus combining the whole influence of visible objects on the imagination. If we are astonished at the first sight of the Colossal statues on the monte Cavallo at Rome, a secret and growing pleasure succeeds this amazement: For, though the immensity of their form seems, at first, to set them above the scale of our ideas, yet, so happy is the symmetry of their parts, such a freedom of design, such an aptness for action prevail throughout, that the eye soon becomes familiar with their proportions, and capable of their beauties.

[g] Non vidit Phidias Jovem, fecit tamen, velut tonantem; nec stetit ante oculos ejus Minerva, dignus tamen illa arte animus, et concepit Deos et exhibuit.

Senec. Ret. lib. x.

B. IT

*B.* It is probable, that a great part of the pleasure which we receive in the contemplation of such Colossal figures, arises from a comparison of their proportions with our own. The mind, in these moments, grows ambitious; and feels itself aspiring to greater powers, and superior functions: These noble and exalted feelings diffuse a kind of rapture through the soul; and raise in it conceptions and aims above the limits of humanity. The finest, and, at the same time, most pleasing sensations in nature, are those, which, (if I may be allowed the expression) carry us out of ourselves, and bring us nearest to that divine original from which we spring.

*A.* To this power of humanizing, if I may so call it, these Colossal proportions, succeeds that of annexing the sublime to the most minute. When two such extremes correspond



correspond in their effects, we may be assured, that the merit in both springs from the same cause, a [b] greatness of manner. The most celebrated instance in this kind, was the Hercules of Lyfippus; which, though not more than a foot in height, filled the imagination equal to the Hercules Farnese. — As this statue is lost, we must content ourselves with the description of it by Statius [i].

*At the chaste board the god himself appears,  
Inspires the artist, and the banquet cheers;  
He, only he, could teach thee to confine  
A great idea to minute design;*

[b] Μεγαλοτεχον.

[i] Hæc inter castæ genius tutelaque mensæ  
Amphitryoniades, &c.

—— Deus ille, Deus: Sesequæ videndum  
Indulset, Lyfippe, tibi, parvusque videri  
Sentirique ingens; et cum mirabilis intra  
Stet mensura pedem, tamen exclamare libebit,  
(Si visus per membra feras) hoc pectora pressus  
Vastator Nemees, — &c.

Lib. iv. Sylv.

From

*From part to part our heated fancy flies,  
And gives to character, what space denies ;  
Press'd by that arm, the lion pants for breath ;  
And Cacus trembles at th' impending death.*

B. THE Jupiter of Phidias, and Hercules of Lysippus are equal examples of the superior genius of the Greeks ; and it must be confessed, that if they have improved on nature, it was not so much by quitting her proportions, as excelling her ideas. When I reflect on this evident superiority of the Greek artists over the ancient and Modern Roman, I am at a loss to account for it : I cannot attribute it wholly to a pre-eminence of genius ; being unwilling to believe, that nature could confine true taste to such narrow boundaries : And yet, if she is partial to particular ages, why may not she be so to particular climates ?

A. THIS

*A.* THIS reflection is humbling ; let us look for a second cause. [*k*] Seneca observes, “ That naked bodies, as they betray their imperfections, so they give a “ full exhibition of their beauties : ” Each of these effects tends to the improvement of design, Cloathing on the contrary, disguises beauty, and gives a protection to faults. The [*l*] Greeks, it is known, almost ever represented their figures naked. But the Romans, whose character was military, dressed theirs in armour. That art which challenges criticism, must always be superior to that which shuns it. We are told by Pliny, [*m*] “ That Praxiteles had

[*k*] *Nuda corpora, vitia si qua sint, non celant, nec laudes parum ostentant. Lib. iii. Ep. 6.*

[*l*] *Græca res est nihil velare ; at contra, Romana ac militaris, thoracas addere. Plin. lib. xxxiv. c. 5.*

[*m*] *Duas fecerat Veneres Praxiteles, simulque vendebat ; alteram velata specie, quam ob id quidem*

made

“made two statues of Venus, which he  
“sold at the same time; the one clothed;  
“which, for that reason, was preferred by  
“the people of Cos: Those of Gnidus  
“purchased that which was rejected. The  
“reputation of these statues was widely  
“different; for by this last Praxiteles en-  
“nobled Gnidus.” We may conceive then  
that the Greeks had the same advantage  
over the Romans, that the naked Venus had  
over the clothed: This advantage holds  
still more strongly against the moderns;  
who, borrowing their characters and sub-  
jects from a chaste religion, are not only  
forced in decency to clothe their figures;  
but often, by propriety, to make that cloth-  
ing of the coarsest materials. Hence it is,  
that we often see a Saint bending under a  
load of drapery, and the elegant form of a

prætulerunt Coi; rejectam Gnidii emerunt: Immen-  
sâ differentiâ famæ; illo enim signo Praxiteles nobi-  
litavit Gnidum. Lib. xxxvi. c. 5.

nun overwhelmed in the blanketting of her order. If paint sometimes represents to us the naked body of a Christ, it is either stretched on a cross, or disfigured by sufferings; whilst the virgin-mother is hooded to the eyes, and the beauties of the Magdalen are absorbed in velvet. The result of this habit is evident, when our first artists come to design the nud; a comparison of Raphael's figures, in the incendio di Borgo, with the Laocoon or Gladiator, would have much the same effect, as that of a Flemish coach-horse with an Arabian courser.

*B.* It may be offered in this place, that as our subjects seldom admit the nude, we are not such great sufferers by a neglect of it.

*A.* But this negligence has the worst effects, even where it seems protected; for

we



we find, that our painters are much more happy in the disposition and cast of their draperies, than in the correctness of their design; and Raphael would not be so much praised, for giving us, in his clothed figures, a fair expression of form and proportion, were not the contrary of this the general character of our painters. These reflections have carried me somewhat wide of my subject; I must return to it.

THE design of the ancients is distinguished by an union in the proportions, a simplicity of Contour, and excellence of character. Of the first I have said as much as I might do, without venturing too far into the mechanic of the art: But as I have only hinted at the others, some more particular remarks may not be improper. There is no one excellence of design, from which we receive such immediate pleasure, as from a gracefulness of action: If we

observe the attitudes and movements of the Greek statues, we shall mark that careless decency, and unaffected grace, which ever attend the motions and gestures of men unconscious of observation. There [n] is a prodigious difference, between those movements which flow from nature, and those which are directed by art.

THE ancients knew this well; and hence followed that singular simplicity which characterises their works: For, though at times, as in the Venus of Medicis, and daughters of Niobe, they rise to an assumed gracefulness; and even profess a desire to please; yet this is confin'd to so simple a contour; it is so little above the measure of ordinary action, that it appears less the effect of study, than the natural result of

[n] *Paulum interesse censes, ex animo omnia,*

*Ut fert natura, facias, an de industria?*

*Terent. And. act. iv. scene 5.*

a superior

a superior character, or an habitual politeness.

*B. RAPHAEL* has, in this particular, been wonderfully happy in his imitation of the antique. The most courtly imagination cannot represent to itself an image of a more winning grace, than is to be seen in his *Sancta Cæcilia* : Indeed, an elegant simplicity is the characteristic of his design ; we no where meet in him the affected contrasts of *Mic. Angelo*, or the studied attitudes of *Guido* ; the true difference between those, may be best conceived, in a supposed comparison of the real characters of the Drama, with the actors who personate them ; in *Raphael*, and the antique, we see *Alexander* and *Hamlet*, in *Mic. Angelo* and *Guido*——And, ——

*A. THOUGH* in treating of grace and beauty, character, so far as it is determin-

ed by them, has been naturally included; yet there remains still a more essential part; I mean, that expression of a mind, conveyed in the air of the head, and intelligence of the countenance. If, in the other branches of design, the ancients are to be admired; in this they are wonderful. However enlightened we may be by the most elegant observance of nature, or warmed by the most poetic descriptions, the Belvedere Apollo, and daughter of Niobe still give us new ideas of nobleness, energy, and beauty. The statuaries of Greece, were not mere mechanicks; men of education and literature, they were more the companions than servants of their employers: Their taste was refined by the conversation of courts, and enlarged by the lecture of their poets: Accordingly, the spirit of their studies breathes through their works. We see no such influence in the productions of the moderns; their greatest merit

merit is a servile imitation of the antique; the moment they lose sight of them they are lost. In the elegant, they are little; in the great, charged; character they have none; their beauty is the result of measure, not idea: And if, mistaking extravagance for spirit, they aim at the sublime, it ends in the blusterings of Bernini, or caricatures of Michael Angelo.

*B.* FROM all that you have offered on the design of the ancients, we may define grace to be the most pleasing conceivable action, expressed with the utmost simplicity each occasion will admit of.

*A.* So far as a definition of Grace can go, yours gives a just idea of it; for, it implies the highest degree of elegance in the choice; of propriety in the application; and of ease in the execution: You rightly term it an action, for there is no grace



without motion. Thus, Milton distinguishes it from beauty.

*Grace was in all her steps, heav'n in her eye.*

Venus was but guessed at by her beauty; she was known by her motions ———  
*Vera incessu patuit Dea.*——But, the perfection of Grace is, when it becomes [*o*] characteristick; and marks some amiable emotion in the mind. Such, we may presume, was the excellence of Apelles [*p*];

[*o*] Let us unite to these amiable expressions, a becoming air of the head, flexure of the body, and an elegant disposition of the limbs, we shall then have a clear conception of that *correggiesque* Grace, which it has so much puzzled our writers to explain. I have in my possession an excellent copy of the St. Jerome of Correggio, where one may see in the Angel, the Madonna, the Christ, and the Magdalen, so many distinct examples of this idea.

[*p*] *Præcipua Apellis in arte venustas fuit, cum eadem ætate maximi pictores essent; quorum opera cum admiraretur, collaudatis omnibus, deesse iis unam*

who,

“ who, living at the same time with some  
“ of the greatest painters; after he had  
“ seen and admired their several works,  
“ declared, that the only thing wanting in  
“ them was Grace; that they possessed  
“ every other excellence; but in this, he  
“ saw no one equal to himself.”

B. THE testimonies which you produce from their writings; but above all, the Greek statues, which we may look upon as living witnesses, sufficiently prove the merit of the ancients. Let us now, if you please, consider that of the moderns: Thus, establishing a general idea of comparison between the two, we shall have a more perfect one of both. I do not mean to lead you into a detail of the perfections or imperfections of our different artists; it will

illam Venerem dicebat, quam Græci *Xapla* vocant; cætera omnia contigisse, sed hac soli sibi neminem parem. Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 10.

be

be sufficient to throw the merit of the cause upon some one, who is generally allowed to be the most excellent.

A. THERE is no difficulty in our choice : I shall lay before you the reflections I have made on the design of Raphael ; with this latitude, that you may admit or reject them as they happen to square with your own ; for, this should always be the case, where we profess to have no other guide but feeling ; and to form our judgment merely from effects. ———

THE design of Raphael was, in its beginnings, dry, but correct ; he enlarged it much on seeing the drawings of Michael Angelo : Of too just an eye to give intirely into the excesses of his model, he struck out a middle style ; which, however, was not so happily blended, nor so perfectly original, as quite to throw off influence

of the extremes: Hence, in the great, he is too apt to swell into the charged; in the delicate, to drop into the little.—His design, notwithstanding, is beautiful; but never arrived to that perfection, which we discover in the Greek statues. He is excellent in the characters of Philosophers, Apostles, and the like; but the figures of his women have not that elegance, which is distinguished in the Venus of Medicis, or the daughter of Niobe; in these, his convex Contours have a certain heaviness, which, when he seeks to avoid, he falls into a dryness still less pardonable.

*B.* YET his proportions are esteemed excellent; and their symmetry such, as to give to his figures an effect beyond the promise of their stature.

*A.* It

*A.* IT is true, but yet, not having formed his manner on the most beautiful antique, we do not see in him that elegance in the proportions, that freedom in the joints, which lend all their motion to the Laocoon and Gladiator. Instead of these, the figures of Michael Angelo were his models in the great style; whence, in his convex Contour, having quitted the lines of nature, and not having substituted those of ideal beauty, he became too like his original; as may be seen in his Incendio di Borgo. Would you therefore place Raphael in his true point of view, you must observe him in the middle age; in old men; or, in the nervous nature: In his Madonna's, he knew very well how to choose, as likewise how to vary the most beautiful parts in nature: But, he knew not, like the Greek statuaries, how to express a beauty superior to the natural. Thus,

in



in his Galatea, at the palace Chigi, where he has [q] professedly attempted a character of perfect beauty, he has fallen short of the beauty of his Madonna's: The cause of which seems to me to be this, that, in the former, he drew after his own ideas, which were imperfect; in the latter, he copied beautiful nature, which was almost perfect. I am confirmed in this opinion by a second observation: Of all the objects of paint, Angels call most for ideal beauty; those of Raphael, are by no means distinguished in this particular; for, he had no examples for them in nature, but was

[q] In a letter to the count Baldassar Castiglione, he speaks of his Galatea in the following words: "Della Galatea, mi terrei un gran maestro, se vi fossero la metà delle tante cose, che V. S. mi scrive: E le dico, che per dipingere una bella, mi bisognaria veder più belle: Ma essendo carestia di belle donne, io mi servo di certa idea, che mi viene alla mente. Se questa hà in se alcuna eccellenza d'arte, io non so: Ben mi affatico di averla."

obliged to draw them from his own imagination.

*B.* Accordingly, he has given them a motion, spirit, and expression, for which he could have no example.

*A.* TRUE; but these do not constitute beauty, which is our present object: On the contrary, in Raphaël they often counteract it: Thus, in the heads of his Madonna's, the nose is generally too large; he thought, no doubt, that this gave more meaning and sensibility to the face. In the same manner, his men, of the middle and advanced age, have their features too strongly marked: the muscles, particularly those of the lips and eye-brows, are charged: It is plain, that he preferred this form, because, by it, he could more easily express the several emotions of the mind. But, the perfection of an art, is, to unite the  
justest

justest expressions to the finest forms. The Belvedere Apollo, and the daughter of Niobe, are the standards of beauty; what energy, what a divine expression is there in the one? what distress, what an affecting sensibility in the other? There are few expressions (if we except those, which excite in the beholders either hatred or contempt) which may not be more happily marked in a fine countenance, than in such as are ill-favoured; where the features are charged, the slightest movements throw them into forcible expressions; the consequences of which are, that the finer symptoms of passion are in a great measure lost; and the stronger ones lose much of their force, by the facility with which they are expressed: But, in a face naturally beautiful and composed, not only the degrees of passion are traced with delicacy; but, the violent agitations of the soul, affect us more sensibly, by the total disturbance and alteration which they

they produce in the countenance. This idea will always have a great effect on the intelligent observer; and, in proportion as the execution is more difficult, it will do more honour to the artist. I must add to these remarks, that, exclusive of the force which beauty gives to expressions in general, there are some, which cannot well exist without it: Thus, if dignity, courage, love, or joy be thrown into a charged or ill-favoured countenance, they grow into an extremity, by which they lose their very essence; and are transformed into pride, fierceness, lust and grimace. You are not to suppose, that in the cases above-mentioned, I always speak of either absolute beauty, or absolute deformity; there are degrees in both; and the judgment of the artist consists, in proportioning those degrees to the several occasions.

*B. THIS,*

*B.* THIS is, to turn a pleasing art into an useful science; and to make every picture a school of virtue. But yet, I cannot forgive you, the having reduced the design of Raphael, so much below the standard, at which it is generally placed.

*A.* THE judicious Poussin has gone much farther than I have done, or even than he had a right to go; when he affirmed, that Raphael among the moderns was an angel, but, that compared with the ancients, he was an ass. This is too much; however, it serves to show how sensibly this painter felt the difference that was between them. But, setting aside these comparisons our purpose is to come at a settled idea of the most perfect design: What is it to us, whether the examples were produced two thousand, or two hundred years ago? A man of taste, like the philosopher, should

F

be



be a citizen of the world, acknowledge merit wherever he meets it, indifferent whether it shines forth in a Raphael or Apelles, in a Michael Angelo or Glycon.

*B.* You have advanced, that the greatest excellence of design was grace; whence is it then, that Correggio, who, in this is inimitable, is, by many, placed so low in the class of Designers?

*A.* THIS arises from a want of attention to the character and pursuits of this amiable painter. His constant aim was grace: And a happy effect of clear obscure: A waving and varied Contour was necessary to this end; Hence, he gave wholly into the serpentine, studiously avoiding right lines, and acute angles, as too simple in their effects. [*r*] Thus the habit, and even ne-

[*r*] Nullum sine venia placuit ingenium: Da mihi quemcumque vis magni nominis virum, dicam illi quid

cessity of continually varying his out line, threw him into little errors in drawing, which spring not, as some think, from an ignorance of this branch of his art, but from a predilection for another; and, there are few, I believe, who would wish those inadvertencies away, accompanied with the charms which gave occasion to them.

*B.* It is a dispute among the critics, whether he ever saw or imitated the antique.

*A.* This dispute is his greatest praise; for, they who suppose he did, cannot otherwise account for the general beauty,

*ætas sua ignoverit, quid in illo sciens dissimulaverit: Multos dabo, quibus vitia non nocuerint; quosdam, quibus profuerint; quos, si quis corrigit, delet: Sic enim vitia virtutibus immista sunt, ut illas secum tractura sint.*

*Sen. Ep. cxiv.*

and elegance of his design: While those who are of a contrary opinion, grounded on imperfect relations of his life, or the lapses and unsteadiness of his pencil, are forced to impute that beauty and elegance to a pure strength of genius. Certainly, his manner seems to have in it all the warmth of invention, as it has a certain boldness, superior to imitation, and productive of uncommon graces. Upon the whole, I think, we may affirm of his design, where it is not sacrificed to his more favourite aims, that it is often masterly, and always pleasing; a quality, rarely met with in those servile and unideal painters, who think they have attained every perfection, if they keep within the rules of drawing; “[s] with these, leanness passes for

[s] *Macies illis pro fanitate, et judicii loco infirmitas est; et dum satis putant vitio carere, in*

“health,

DIAL. IV.      *Of Design.*      69

“health, and weakness for judgment;  
“and, while they think it sufficient  
“to be free from faults, they fall in-  
“to that capital fault, the want of  
“beauties.”

id ipsum incidunt vitium, quod virtutibus ca-  
rent. Quint. xi. 4.

## DIALOGUE V.

## Of COLOURING.

A. **S**HOULD the most able master in design, attempt to represent, by that alone, a rose or grape, we should have but a faint and imperfect image; let him add to each its proper colours, we no longer doubt; we smell the rose, we touch the grape; hence the poet [t]:

*So glow'd the grape, so perfect the deceit,  
My hand reach'd forward, ere I found the cheat.*

It seems then, that the first gives a general idea; the second a particular existence. It was this, no doubt, that induced Plutarch

[t] Μικρὴ καλῆσχον τὸν βόλῳ τοῖς δακτύλοις;  
ὑπεραπαλῆθεις τῇ θεᾷ τῶν χρωμάτων.



to affirm, “[u] that in painting, we are  
 “ more struck by colouring than drawing,  
 “ by reason of its similitude and decep-  
 “ tion:” And another observes, “[x] That  
 “ the painter may design the outlines and  
 “ proportions of a man, but it is by co-  
 “ louring, that he brings it to represent a  
 “ Socrates or Plato.” The ancients were  
 not contented with attributing to colours  
 the power of realizing objects; they make  
 them to be their chief ornament, the very  
 soul of beauty: [y] Thus Tully, “ There  
 “ is in the body a certain harmony of pro-  
 “ portions, united to the charm of colour-  
 “ ing, and this is called beauty. An au-

[u] Ἐν γραφαῖς κινήτικώτερον ἐστὶ χρῶμα γραμμῆς, διὰ τὸ  
 ἀνδρεῖκελον καὶ ἀπαῖηλον: De Poetis aud.

[x] Ὁ ζωγράφος ποιεῖ πρῶτον κοῖνον ἀνθρώπου ἐν σκιαγρα-  
 φία, εἰς αὐτὸ χρωματίζων ἀγεί εἰς τὸ ποιῆσαι Σωκράτην, ἢ Πλα-  
 τῶνα. Ammonius in x. Categ. Aristot.

[y] Corporis est quædam apta figura membrorum,  
 cum coloris quadam suavitate, eaque dicitur pulchri-  
 tudo.

“thor, of no less authority, observes; [z]  
 “that such a body may be deemed truly  
 “beautiful, in which a temperate and  
 “pure blood fills the limbs, and swells  
 “the muscles, spreading through the whole  
 “a ruddy tinge and glow of beauty.”

Hence it was, that a Grecian lady of admired taste, being asked, which was the finest colour in nature, answered, the blush of an ingenuous and beautiful youth.

B. You need not draw all your examples from antiquity: Whatever rank our painters may hold, we have Titians in our poets. —Observe how Shakespear pencils:

*'Tis beauty truly blent, whose red and white  
 Natures own sweet and cunning hand laid on.*

[z] In quo temperatus ac bonus sanguis implet membra, et exsurgit toris; ipsos quoque nervos rubore tegit, ac decore commendat. De caus. corrupt. eloq. c. 21.

And

And Fletcher, who excels in the description of beauty and its effects;

*Have I not receiv'd*

*A lady to my bed, that in her eye*  
*Keeps mounting fire, and on her tender cheeks*  
*Inevitable colour?*                      Maid's Tragedy.

Thus too our divine Milton:

*To whom the angel, with a smile that glow'd*  
*Celestial rosy red, Love's proper hue.*

Such as these may be truly called colours dipped in heaven; and, a fine complexion, in the language of a poet, is the die of Love: Certainly it gives a wonderful effect to beauty; it is a hint of something more than human; it comes forth as the emanation of an intrinsic purity and loveliness, and diffuses through the human form a tinge of the angelic nature.

A. You

A. You paint it like one who had felt its power. The influence, indeed, of this species of beauty, which is the result of colours, seems to be universal; and to extend to all beings capable of love. But (if we may credit the nice observers of nature) it is in none more remarkable than in birds [a];

*Thro' the bright flocks the cautious wooer flies,  
Dweels on each spot, and notes their various dies:  
Foe to a stranger love, he yields alone  
To kindred tints, and beauties like his own.*

B. I shall wish hence forward to understand the language of a goldfinch; what a pleasure would it be, to hear the male warbling forth,

[a] ——— Agmina late

Fæminea explorat cautus, maculasque requirit  
Cognatas, paribusque interlita corpora guttis.

Spect. N°. 412.

*Urit*

*Urit me Glyceræ nitor,  
Et vultus nimium lubricus aspici.*

A. THE open was palpable, and your raillery is perfectly fair. But, to return to our subject; whatever may be the influence of colours on other beings, we can have no doubt of it in ourselves; insomuch, that irregular, and even ordinary features, shall often, by the mere lustre of red and white, overbear the power of the most perfect symmetry.

WE are not to wonder therefore, that the poets, hurrying over the other circumstances of beauty, dwell with so much pleasure upon this. Thus the elegant Tibullus [b],

[b] Candor erat, qualem præfert Latonia Luna,  
Et color in niveo corpore purpureus.  
Ut Juveni primum virgo deducta marito,  
Inficitur teneras ore rubente genas;

*Such*



*Such a mix'd whiteness spreads the doubtful moon  
 So thro' his snowy skin the scarlet shone ;  
 Thus, ting'd in blushes, moves the conscious maid  
 With step suspended to the nuptial bed :  
 Thus intermix'd with lilies breathes the rose,  
 And ripening apple with vermilion glows.*

Statius on a similar occasion is more warm,  
 and kindles almost to extravagance [c] ;

*Stripp'd of his garments, with a sudden bound  
 He starts to view, and deals a brightness round ;  
 His polish'd limbs, and glowing breast display  
 Beauties, that gladden like the spring of day ;  
 Thro' his whole frame diffus'd, our eyes may trace  
 The kindred blush and splendor of his face.*

Et cum contexunt amaranthis alba puellæ  
 Lilia, et autumnò candida mala rubent.

Lib. iii. Eleg. 4.

[c] Emicat, et torto chlamydem diffibulat auro.  
 Effulsere artus, membrorumque omnis aperta est  
 Lætitiâ, insignesque humeri, nec pectora nudis  
 Deteriora genis, latuitque in corpore vultus.

Theb. lib. vi.

If

If the poets considered colouring as the chief beauty in nature; it is no wonder, that painters, whose art is an imitation of nature, should make it the great object of their study. Accordingly, Parrhasius, Zeuxis, and Apelles, the most celebrated painters, were at the same time, the most excellent colourists. If we examine the praises bestowed on the last of them, we shall find, that they turn chiefly on that truth and beauty, which are the gift of colours: The master-piece of this painter, and consequently of the art itself, was his Venus anadyomene. Tully thus marks its perfections, [d] “ In the Coan Venus, that is  
 “ not real body, but the resemblance of a  
 “ body : Nor is that ruddiness, so diffused  
 “ and blended with white, real blood, but

[d] In Venere Coa, corpus illud non est, sed simile corpori; nec ille fusus et candore mixtus rubor, sanguis est, sed quædam sanguinis similitudo. De nat. Deor. lib. i.

“ a certain

“a certain resemblance of blood.” Ovid alludes to this same tenderness and warmth of pencil [*d*].

*In graceful aēt her sea-wet locks compress'd,  
Send the quick drops which trickle down her breast,  
O'er her bright skin the melting bubbles spread,  
And clothe her beauties in a softer shade.*

[*e*] Apelles a little before his death attempted a second Venus, which was to have ex-

[*d*] Sic madidos siccat digitis Venus uda capillos,  
Et modo maternis tecta videtur aquis.

Lib. xi. Trist.

To the same purpose the epigrammatist Ausonius,

Ut complexa manu madidos falis æquore crines,  
Humidulis spumas stringit utraque comis.

[*e*] Apelles Veneris caput, et summa pectoris politissima arte perfecit: Reliquam pratem corporis inchoatam reliquit.

Lib. i. Ep. 9.

Nemo pictor est inventus, qui Veneris eam partem, quam Apelles inchoatam reliquisset, absolveret; oris enim pulchritudo, reliqui corporis imitandi spem aufererat.

De Officiis, lib. iii.

ceeded

ceeded the first; but died, just as he had finished the head and breasts. We are told, that no painter could be prevailed on to complete this figure; the idea, the character, the style of design were determined; it should seem then, that what they dreaded, was, a comparison of their tints with his. It is certain, the reputation of this painter was not owing to great compositions; many of his most celebrated works were [f] single figures, and, some of them, painted from the life; a practice, which naturally produces, as is proved in Titian, an excellency in colouring; as this is only to be learnt, by an accurate and diligent observance of the mixed and subtile tints in nature. Accordingly, Pliny tells

[f] Fecit Apelles Antigonum thoracatum, cum equo incedentem: Peritiores artis præferunt omnibus ejus operibus eundem regem sedentem equo. Alexandrum et Philippum quoties pinxerit, enumerare super-  
vacuum est.

Plin. xxxv. 10.

us,

us, that he [g] “ painted a hero naked, in  
 “ which he challenged nature herself.”  
 But, above all, Propertius pays him the  
 prettiest compliment, and, at the same time,  
 gives us the justest notion of his merit,  
 when, dissuading his mistress from the use  
 of paint, he recommends to her to trust  
 to her real complexion; which he com-  
 pares to the [b] native carnation of Apel-  
 les. —

[g] Pinxit et heroa nudum; eâque picturâ naturam  
 ipsam provocavit. Lib. xxxv. 10.

[b] The common objection to the colouring of  
 Apelles, is, that he used but four colours: For this  
 we have the authority of Pliny, who, at the same  
 time, names the colours, viz. black, white, red and  
 yellow. Now, as it does not seem possible to form a  
 perfect carnation from these, we must either suppose  
 that Pliny was mistaken, or, that the praises bestowed  
 on the colouring of Apelles, by all the best judges of  
 antiquity, and by Pliny himself among the rest, were  
 not just. There is a passage in Cicero, which, I think,  
 clears this difficulty, and proves that Pliny was mis-  
 taken; it is as follows: Similis in pictura ratio est, in



*Qualis Apelleis est color in tabulis.*

Thus making it a merit in nature, to rise to a competition with art. By attempting to prove that colouring was the great excellence of Apelles, it must not be inferred from hence, that he was wanting in the other parts: The age in which he lived, was distinguished above all those before and after, by a perfection in design; a weakness therefore in this, would not have passed uncensured in so capital a painter. The resemblance, likewise, in the praises bestowed on him, with those, which, in later times have been attributed to Correggio,

qua Zeuxim, et Polygotum, et Timentem, et eorum, qui non sunt usi plus quatuor coloribus, *formas et lineamenta* laudamus. At in Aëtione, Nicomacho, Protogene et Apelle, jam perfecta sunt omnia. Thus, those who used but four colours, are praised for their *proportions* and *characters* only; but, Apelles is distinguished from them, and declared to be perfect in every branch of his art. The inference is obvious.

G

the

the great master in the clear obscure, gives just reason to suppose, that he was in this particular, equal, if not superior to any of his time. I would recommend this to the observation of those, who, on a comparison of modern with ancient painting, are so ready to suppose the advantage on the side of the former; as I do likewise all that I have offered on the character of Apelles, to those sanguine admirers of the Roman School, who consider colouring as a kind of superfluity in paint. Having thus far shewn the merit of colouring, so far as it is productive of truth and beauty; you may expect I should say something of a branch much cultivated and admired by the moderns; I mean that harmony and tone, which spring from a happy disposition of variegated draperies: A perfect knowledge of the union and opposition of colours, together with the effects of their different shades and reflections, requires,

no doubt, great study and practice; but I apprehend, that too great an attention to this flattery of the eye, has often made our moderns neglectful of the more essential parts. That this was the case in the inferior æra of ancient painting, we have the authority of Dionysius Halicarnasseus: “[i] The “ paintings of the ancients, (says he) were “ simple and unvaried in their colouring; “ but correct in their drawing; and distinguished by their elegance: Those which “ succeeded, less correct in drawing, were “ more finished, more varied in their lights “ and shades; trusting their effects to the “ multitude of their colours.” You will observe, that this boasted science of the moderns, was, to the ancients, a symptom

[i] Αεχαιαι γραφαι χρωμασιν εργασμεναι απλως, και ουδεμιαν εν ταις μιγμασιν εχουσαι ποικιλιαν, ακριβεις δε ταις γραμμασι, και πολυ το χαριεν εν ταυταις εχουσαι. Αι δε μετ’ εκεινας, ευγρημμοι μεν ηλτον, εξειργασμεναι δε μαλλον, σκια τε και φαι ποικιλλομεναι, και εν τω των μιγμων πληθει την ισχυν εχουσαι. Dion. Hal. in Isæo, p. 167. ed. Oxon.

of the decay of paint : And indeed, can the happiest effect in this kind, that ever flowed from the pencil of Titian, make us amends for his frequent errors in drawing, or poverty of character ? Can the best painted drapery of a Carrache, or Guido, balance the want of grace and beauty in the one, of warmth and expression in the other ? Apelles seeing a Helen, that had been painted by one of his scholars, loaded with ornaments : Cried out, [k] “ So, young man ! not “ able to paint her beautiful, thou hast “ made her fine.” When I reflect on the authority of the writers, and the agreement of their notions on the subject of colouring, I am inclined to believe, that the ancients were equal, if not superior to the moderns in the most essential parts : I should lay little stress on general praises, or the extra-

[k] Ω μειρακιον, μη δυναμενος γραφαι καλην, πλουσιαν  
σχεπονηκας.

vangance of admiration ; because, it is natural to us to praise the best we know : But, when I meet with distinctions, which mark the degrees of perfection, and with effects, which can proceed but from the Highest, I can no longer doubt. I shall offer you an instance in each kind, which strike me as decisive. Parrhasius and Euphranor had each painted a Theseus ; “ [1] Euphranor “ nor objected to his rival, that his Theseus “ looked as if he had fed on roses, his own “ as if he had fed on flesh.” What more could we say of Titian and Barocci ? Yet, this slight and florid style, was not the constant manner of Parrhasius ; Pliny tells us, that he painted two warriors, one of which rushing to the battle seemed to sweat ; the other, stripped of his armour, was seen to

[1] Ευφρανωρ τον Θησεα τον εαυτου, τω Παρρασιου παρε-  
βαλει λεγων, τον μεν εκεινου ροδοα βεβρωκεναι, τον δε εαυτου  
κρεα βοτια. Plutarch. Bellone an pace clariores fuerint  
Athenienses.



pant. What a warmth, what a tenderness of pencil? Can paint express that melting diffusion, that dewy moisture, which springs from a quickening perspiration? The mellowest tints of the Venetian school furnish no such ideas. Our notions of excellence are too much limited by our experience; had we never seen better colouring than that of the *Galatea* of Raphael, a description of the *Venus* of Titian would pass for extravagant. Why might not the Greek school have been as far superior to the Venetian, as this is to the Roman? We will now pursue the same method we proposed before, and consider the colouring of the moderns in their greatest master Titian.

B. THOUGH I confess this was the rule proposed, yet, I must take the liberty to break in upon it, and to beg, that you would first give your opinion of the colouring of Raphael.

THE

THE advances of such a painter in every branch of his art, are worthy our observation; particularly too, as I find the critics much divided on this point, some holding him to be an excellent, others an indifferent colourist.

A. RAPHAEL, at his setting out, had no other guide than his own genius; as, the painters his predecessors, could furnish him with no examples to imitate. After some time, he learnt from Fra. Bartholomeo a better style; his touch became more vigorous, his colouring grew warmer, and he finished less; yet, he still preserved too great a sameness; and all his personages had the same brown and dusky complexion. He persisted a long time in this taste; and, one may venture to affirm, that he never wholly abandoned it. In his picture of the dispute of the sacrament, which is the best

coloured of all his works in fresco, one discovers a difference between the carnation of his angels and men; — such a circumstance would not be remarked in our best colourists; who preserve this distinction, not only in different beings, but likewise in the different sexes and ages. In the St. Jerome of Correggio, the complexion of the saint, the angel, the child, the mother, and the Magdalen, are all varied, agreeable to their different ages, natures, and characters. In his school of Athens, Raphael was more bold, and less finished; and, changing still his manner in the Heliodorus, he painted in a style more free and varied; though yet, in the delicate, he was short of perfection. At length, his passion for design, made him negligent of colouring; as we see in the Incendio di Borgo. About this time, he began to paint with less diligence; and having established his character, left much to his scholars; till at length, finding his reputation

putation diminished, he determined to re-establish it, by exerting his whole skill and knowledge in his transfiguration. The colouring of this is esteemed good; yet, from that quality or sameness, which I noticed before, his flesh is still hard and dry. His demitints were composed merely of lights and shades, whence they retained always a greyish and dusky cast; and, whereas, a fine and delicate skin, has a greater variety of tints, than the gross; Raphael, not possessing this variety, his carnations are generally coarse and dense. We must observe in this place, that the paintings of Raphael in fresco, are better coloured than those in oil: As the first was his favourite practice, he left the second mostly to his scholars, particularly to Julio Romano; contenting himself with retouching and finishing: For this reason, we cannot so well judge of his paintings in oil: In which, such as we see them, he is much inferior, with respect to colouring,

colouring, to Correggio and Titian; but, in fresco, he is superior to all.

*B.* YOUR observations on the failings of Raphael, will be as shades to the merit and beauty of Titian.

*A.* PORTRAIT painting has all along been the favourite practice of the Venetian school. This constant imitation of nature, has led them into the knowledge of those various tints, by which she at once distinguishes, and expresses the different carnations. To describe, what colours, or mixtures of them, produce those various appearances, is the mechanic part of the art; our subject is the ideal. We may compare, or determine the degrees of merit in the best painters, without following minutely their mechanic process; I can affirm, for instance, without danger of being contradicted, that Correggio has not the tenderness or delicacy of

4

Titian:



Titian : His flesh is too firm ; the skin too much stretched ; the humid of our composition is not sufficiently marked. An artist might tell us, that these defects proceed from a colouring too yellow or red ; from demitints too much verging on the green ; whereas, nature, and the paintings of Titian, prove, that, in clear and transparent skins, the humid ever produces a bluish cast.

BUT, to leave this matter to those whose province it is. I shall content myself, in this place, with observing, that in colouring, [*m*] Titian, of all the moderns, comes the nearest to nature, and of course to perfection. To enlarge more particularly on his merit, would be but a repetition of the

[*m*] Might I presume to censure the colouring of Titian in any particular, it would be in this, that his male and female tints (if I may so call them) are not sufficiently distinguished : They are both extremely tender and animated, but, the colouring in his women is too vigorous and masculine.

remarks,



which, you just now supposed the moderns to be much superior to the ancients.

*A.* My supposition was grounded on the obscurity of their writers, and the difference of their practice. The ancients versed in the nude, derived from this, as I have before observed, their elegance and correctness in design. They were no less indebted to it, for their truth and beauty of colouring. The moderns, on the other hand, particularly the Venetians, accustomed to clothe their figures, in velvet, silks, woollen, linen and the like, were naturally led into an observance of the different [*n*] effects of their

[*n*] We may form a general idea of the various effects of reflections from the following examples: If a blue be reflected on a yellow, the latter becomes greenish; if on a red, the red becomes purple; and so on through a variety of combinations: And as the white is of a nature to receive all the colours, and to be tinged with that of each reflection, the painter must be careful how his carnations may be affected by the several reflections.

reflections;

reflections: as, of the accord or disagreement in their apposition. In order to be convinced, that this accord or disagreement is not fantastical, we need but observe the rainbow in its full display of colours; at which time, their union is perfect: Let the red, the blue, or yellow disappear, it is entirely disturbed. In the same manner, place green and yellow or yellow and red together in a picture, they are evidently at variance; let the blue interpose, their correspondence is restored. Rubens has painted in imitation of the rainbow; all the colours co-operate; the effect is good but accidental; but, in Titian and Correggio, this arrangement is the result of science, it is a harmony, which springs from a judicious and happy union of consenting colours.

*B.* It should seem that the Mexicans were great masters of this harmony or correspondence of colours, of which, Antonio  
de

de Solis, the elegant author of the Conquest of Mexico, gives the following remarkable instance. “ Among the presents sent to  
“ Cortez from the emperor, was a quantity of plumes and other curiosities, made  
“ of feathers; whose beauty and natural  
“ variety of colours found on rare birds  
“ that country produces, they so placed and  
“ mixed with wonderful art, distributing  
“ the several colours, and shadowing the  
“ light with the dark so exactly, that, without making use of artificial colours, or  
“ of the pencil, they could draw pictures,  
“ and would undertake to imitate nature.

“ In another place, Montezuma is described seated on a chair of burnished  
“ gold, which glittered through the various works of feathers, placed in hand-  
“ some proportion about, the nice distribution of which, in some measure, seemed to outvie the cost of the metal.”

A. THE



*A.* THE example you have produced in the practice of the Mexicans, is an extraordinary instance of the happy effect from an union of colours ; and it is probable that their artists were, in this particular, nothing inferior to the Italians. Their skill, in waving those various colours into a kind of feathered tapestry, or Mosaick, and forming in them regular pictures, and lively imitations of nature, far exceeds the descriptions we meet with, of the Babylonian tissues : As, in their painted language, they evidently resemble, and seem to have excelled the hieroglyphicks of the Egyptians.

*B.* WHEN we meet with such strokes of resemblance in the efforts of human wit, among nations cut off from all intercourse with each other, we are moved with a kind of pleasing surprise ; some treat them as the inventions of historians ; others account  
for

for them by supposed, though undiscovered, communications; and yet, to consider things justly, nothing can be more natural; the seeds of ingenuity, like those of good sense, are sown in all soils; and it is no more extraordinary, that their productions should be alike, than, that the oranges of New-Spain should resemble those of Old.

## D I A L O G U E VI.

*Of the* CLEAR OBSCURE.

A. [o] **I**AM persuaded, that notwithstanding all the pains you have taken, to form a just idea of the Clear obscure, from the writings of Vasari, Felibian, and the rest, you will agree with me, that you have more satisfaction in this matter, from a single glance at a picture of Correggio, than from all you have ever read on that subject. Whether this proceeds from a want of knowledge in those writers, or our ignorance of the mechanic of the art, which they are so apt to confound with the ideal,

[o] Tandem sese ars ipsa distinxit, et invenit lumen atque umbras, differentiâ colorum alterna vice sese excitante. Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 5.

I shall

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I shall not take upon me to determine : But, certain it is, had we not before our eyes the examples to which they refer us, we should be often at a loss for their meaning. Now, in treating of the Clear obscure of the ancients, we have neither the works [p] nor writings of their painters to guide us. Happily, their classic authors, men of parts and erudition, were universally admirers of this art. Hence their frequent allusions to it ; their metaphors borrowed from it ; with the descriptions of particular paintings, and their effects. In these last we cannot be deceived ; like effects, in picture, as in nature, must proceed from uniform causes : And when

[p] I do not mention in this place the paintings found at Herculaneum, because I cannot look on them as of a class to rest on them the merits of the ancient artists. There are beauties, it is true, scattered throughout them ; but, they are the beauties *morientis artis*, of an art in its decline ; such as Pliny describes it to have been in his time ; when, as he feelingly laments, *there was nulla nobilis pictura.*

we find these to correspond exactly with our own observations on the works of the moderns, this analogy leads us into a certainty, as to the similitude of the means by which they were produced.

*B.* SUCH inferences as these, when they are natural and unforced, are more conclusive than positive assertions; for we are more apt to be deceived by authority, than by the reason of things.

*A.* [*q*] “LONGINUS observes, that, if we  
 “ place in parallel lines, on the same plane,  
 “ a bright and an obscure colour, the former springs forward, and appears much  
 “ nearer to the eye.” Hence we may remark, that when painters would give a pro-

[*q*] *Επι του αυτου χειμενων επιτεδου παραλληλων εν χρωμασι της σκιας τε και φωτος, ὁμως προυπαντα τε το φως ταις οψεσι, και ου μονον εξοχον, αλλα και εγγυλιζω παρα πολυ φαινεται.* Longinus, sect. xviii.

jection



DIAL. VI. *Of the* CLEAR OBSCURE. 101

jection to any part of a figure, as the breasts of a virgin, and the like, they throw its extremities into shade; that these retiring from the eye, the intermediate parts may have their just relief. From this simple law of nature, springs all the magic of the Clear obscure; not only parts are distinguished, but intire figures are detached from their fond; seem surrounded by air; and meet the imagination with all the energy of life. Thus Philostratus prettily describes the picture of a Venus: “[r] The “ goddess will not seem to be painted, but “ springs from the canvass as if she would “ be pursued.” The same writer tells us, that Zeuxis, Polygnotus, and Euphranor, were, above all things, [s] attentive, to shade happily, and animate their figures;

[r] Οὐ βουλείαι γεγραφθαι δοκεῖν ἡ θεός, ἐκκεῖλαι δὲ οἷα λαβέσθαι. De pictura Veneris, lib. ii. p. 810.

[s] Το εὐσκιον ἡσπασαίῳ, καὶ εὐπνουν, καὶ το εἰσεχόν τε καὶ ἐξεχόν. In vita Apollonii, lib. ii. p. 72.

by which he insinuates, that animation, or the soul of painting, owes its being to a just conduct of lights and shades: And hence it was, no doubt, that the paintings of Parrhasius were termed \* realities; they being possessed of such a force of Clear obscure, as to be no longer the imitations of things, but the things themselves: Agreeable to this, is the observation of an ancient writer, “ That in painting, [i] the contour  
 “ of the illumined part, should be blended  
 “ with and lost in the shade; for on this,  
 “ joined to the advantage of colouring, depend animation, tenderness, and the similitude to truth.”

\* Αψευδεις.

[i] Δει ταν σκιαν και ταν γραμμαν παριμφαινεσθαι επι της γραφιος. Το γαρ εμφυχον και το απαλον, και το μεμιμημενον την αληθειαν, συν τη χρησολογη των χρωματων, μαλιστα γινεται δια τούτων. Theages Pythagoricus apud Stobæum.

B. OVID

B. OVID thus marks this transition of colours in his description of the rainbow [*u*].

*A thousand colours gild the face of day,  
With sever'd beauties, and distinguish'd ray;  
Whilst in their contact they elude the sight,  
And lose distinction in each others light.*

A. A REMARK made by Petronius Arbitrator, on certain paintings of Apelles, points out the happy effects of this delicacy of

[*u*] In quo diversi niteant cum mille colores,  
Transitus ipse tamen spectantia lumina fallit,  
Usque adeo quod tangit idem est, tamen ultima  
distant. Metam. lib. vi.

Videmus in Iride aliquid flammei, aliquid lutei, aliquid cærulei, et alia in *Picturæ modum* subtilibus lineis ducta, ut ait Poeta; ut an dissimiles colores sint, scire non possis, nisi cum primis extrema contuleris; usque adeo mira arte naturæ, quod a simillimis coepit in dissimilia definit. Seneca Nat. quæst. lib. i. c. 3.

pencil. “[x] With such subtilty, such a  
 “likeness to nature, were the extremities  
 “of the figures blended with their shades,  
 “that you must have taken what was be-  
 “fore you for real life.” Nicias the Athe-  
 nian is praised by Pliny, for his knowledge  
 in the Clear obscure; “[y] He preserved  
 “the lights and shades, and was particu-  
 “larly careful, that his paintings should  
 “project from the canvass.” But, the great-

[x] Tanta enim subtilitate extremitates imaginum  
 erant ad *similitudinem* præcisæ, ut crederes etiam ani-  
 morum esse picturas. In Satyrico.

Men of a refined taste, have a feeling of those de-  
 licacies, which escape the notice of common observers ;  
 thus Pliny, ambire enim debet se extremitas ipsa et sic  
 definere, ut promittat alia post se, ostendatque etiam  
 quæ occultat.

This artifice of withdrawing the outline impercep-  
 tibly from the eye, is that which gives to bodies their  
 roundness or projection : It was much studied by the  
 ancients, and too much neglected by Raphael ; whose  
 contours are sometimes so marked, that his figures ap-  
 pear too evidently to be of a piece with the canvass.

[y] Lumen et umbras custodivit, atque ut eminent  
 e tabulis picturæ, maxime curavit. Lib. xxxv—11.

est

est effect in this kind, is by the same attributed to the Alexander of Apelles, in the character of Jupiter the thunderer: “[z]” “The fingers (says he) seem to shoot forward, and the thunder to be out of the picture.” This passage is too striking to need a comment. Let us compare the idea we receive from this, with the happiest productions of the modern artists; what could we expect more from the magick pencil of Correggio? I mean as to the effect of clear obscure; for, I am at a loss, from whom to expect, the beauty and grace of an Alexander, united to the majesty and splendor of a Jove. If it appears from what I have offered, that the painter can by a nice conduct of light and shade, give to the characters he brings on the scene a kind of real existence: So can he, by a par-

[z] Pinxit et fulmen tenentem; digiti eminere videntur, et fulmen extra tabulam esse. Lib. xxxv. 10.



tial distribution of this advantage, give them an evident preference one to the other; and by adding a degree of splendor to each character, proportioned to its importance in the drama, he becomes master of a beautiful gradation, no less satisfactory to the understanding, than pleasing to the eye.

SINCE I cannot offer you an example of this in any of the ancient paintings now to be seen, I shall remind you of a piece of poetic painting, in which you will find every circumstance of dignity and beauty, set off with the finest effect of Clear obscure, that, perhaps, ever entered into the imagination of either poet or painter. It is, where Virgil introduces Æneas into the presence of Dido [a].

[a] Vix ea fatus erat, cum circumfusa repente  
Scindit se nubes, et in æthera purgat apertum.  
Restitit Æneas, claraque in luce refulsit,

*Scarce*

*Scarce had he spoke, when lo ! the bursting cloud  
 Melts into air : Confess'd the hero stood,  
 Mark'd by the form and splendor of a god ;  
 The rays maternal round his temples play,  
 And gild his beauties with a brighter day ;  
 These the fond mother studious to improve,  
 Breath'd on his person all the powers of love ;  
 Thro' his long winding locks the magic flows,  
 Beams from his eyes, and in each feature glows.*

There is something in this description so truly picturesque, it breaks upon the imagination with such a sudden energy of Clear obscure, that I am persuaded, the poet must have had in his eye, some celebrated picture in this style. It is easy to distinguish, when the arts borrow their ideas one from another, and the lights which they so commu-

*Os, humerosque Deo similis : Namque ipsa decoram  
 Cæsariem nato Genetrix, lumenque Juventæ  
 Purpureum, et lætos oculis afflarat honores.*

*Æneid. i. ver. 590.  
 nicate*

nicate and receive, reverberate, and prove reciprocally their beauties.

*B.* I COULD never read the passage you have just quoted, without being struck with the beauty of this image; but you have supplied me with an adventitious pleasure: The correspondence of these sister arts, acts, in some degree, like the harmony of consenting voices; the idea, which they express, is the same, but the effect is doubled in their agreement. When warmed by the description of Virgil's Laocoon, we gaze on that at the Vatican, his cries are more piercing, his pains more exquisite, and the ideas of the poet are as unisons to those of the statuary.

*A.* THUS far I have touched on the two leading objects of the Clear obscure; first, That roundness or projection, by which figures are disengaged from their fond, and  
 2 spring,

spring, as it were, from canvass into life.— Secondly, The distinctive or picturesque distribution of light to the several characters introduced on the scene.

I SAY, I have only touched on these subjects, it being my design, rather to trace the outlines, than to give the full image of painting. To be equal to this last, I must have, not only an informed judgment, but a creative hand; for, without a knowledge, and practice in the mechanic, there is no venturing into the depths of this art. However, I flatter myself, that this sketch, rude as it is, will carry with it more of the true features of the original, than any you could collect from the writings of our painters, or the authority of our Cicerones; and though it should not give us a perfect knowledge, it will give us a pleasing and classical view of our subject. The third care of the painter, in the Clear obscure, if not so obvious,

is no way less essential than the former. When several objects present themselves in one view to the eye, we may observe, that they all differ in the force of their appearance, each receiving and reflecting the rays of light variously, according to its peculiar form, texture, or position: This variety in nature, exerted in its imitation, gives to painting a wonderful air of truth; the eye meeting the same effects in the copy, which it has been used to in the original, loses sight of art, and receives the new creation as from the hand of nature. To this, no doubt, Philostratus alludes, when having proposed [b] hills, woods, and rivers, as the objects

[b] Ἀλση, καὶ ὄρη, καὶ πηγάς, καὶ τὸν αἰθέρα ἐν ᾧ ταῦτα.  
In exod. Icon. p. 763. Ed. Lip.

That the ancients excelled in Landscape painting, we have the testimony of Pliny; Ludius, Divi Augusti, ætate primus instituit amœnissimam parietem picturam, villas, et porticus, ac topiarca opera lucos, nemora, colles, piscinas, euripos, amnes, litora qualia quis optaret: Varias ibi obambulantium species, aut navigantium.

Lib. xxxv. 10.

of



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of paint, he adds, and the air in which they are : Now, there is no representing the air otherwise than by its effects; the which, can be sensible only, in the relative appearances of such objects, as are contained in it. But, of all these circumstances of diversity, the difference arising from their respective distances, is the most obvious and extensive; this is to be distinguished two ways by the diminution of forms; and the degreering of colours. These vary, according to the density, or depth of the medium, through which they are seen. The first, being the measurement of proportions, is regulated by the laws of perspective: But the second, though it must co-operate with

And Pliny the younger, describing one of his Villas, in a letter to a friend, endeavours to give him the highest idea of it, by comparing it with a well painted landscape. Lib. v. Ep. 6.

Let those, who affirm so confidently, that the ancients were unacquainted with the Clear obscure and perspective, explain, how these things are to be represented without them,

the

the former, can be governed only by the eye, and comes within the province of the Clear obscure; which, by setting its objects in full or diminished lights, can mark minutely their withdrawing from the eye, and determine their several distances, by the relative force of their appearances. What knowledge the ancients had of these laws, and what use they made of them, may be collected from many passages in their writings; it will be sufficient to quote an example of each; touching the measurement of forms. “[c] How pleasing, says Philostratus, “ is the artifice of the painter; for, having manned the walls with armed soldiers, he presents some intire, some half “ figures; of some we see the breasts, now

[c] Ἦν το σοφισμα του ζωγραφου· περιβαλλων γαρ τοις τειχεσιν ανδρας απλισμενους, τους μεν αξιους παρεχει οραν, τους δε ημισιας, και σιερνα ενιωη, και κεφαλαις μοναις, και πορθαις μοναις, ειλα αιχμας. Αναλογια ταυτα, ω παι, δει γαρ κλειπυσθαι τους οφθαλμους τοις επιηλθεοις κυκλοις συν-  
απεινολας. Philostratus, lib. i. p. 768. Ed. Lips.

“ the

“ the helmets, and last of all their spears :  
 “ This is proportion, young man ; for,  
 “ the objects must thus steal from the eye,  
 “ as it follows the several groupes through  
 “ their proper gradations.” The same  
 author, is equally explicit, concerning the  
 gradation of colours ; for, describing in a  
 picture, the effects of vision through water,  
 he observes, “[*d*] That the fish near the  
 “ top seemed black ; the next to them, less  
 “ so ; the next to those begin to elude the  
 “ eye ; now they are shadowy, now wa-  
 “ tery, and now mere fancy ; for, the eye,  
 “ as it deepens in the water, finds its powers  
 “ to grow dull and confused.”

B. You have advanced, that, to give  
 depth to a perpendicular plane, and of

[*d*] Μελανες μὲν οἱ ἀνω δοκουσιν, ἡττοτέρω δὲ οἱ ἐφεξῆς· οἱ  
 δὲ μετ’ ἐκείνους, ἢ παρὰ ψευδοῦναι τὴν οὐσίαν· εἰς αὐτὰς οὐκ ἔστι  
 εἰς αὐτὰς, εἰς αὐτὰς ὑπονοῦσαι. Καθαροῦ γὰρ τοῦ ὕδατος ἡ  
 οὐσία ἀμειβόμενα διατρέχει τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ. Phil. Icon. lib. i.  
 c. Piscatores, p. 784.

I

course,

course, the degreeing and distancing of objects, is the province of the Clear obscure: It should seem, that the modern sculptors have not thought so, when, without any such aids, they have attempted in their basso Relievo's to produce the same effects.

*A.* THEIR ill success justifies my observation; their first line of figures, only, has a plane to rest on; the others are suspended, and, contrary to the laws of nature, as they retire from the eye, and diminish in proportion, they rise in height; insomuch, that the feet of the hindmost are often on a parallel with the knees of the foremost. The ancients were too wise to give into such an absurdity; their pursuit, in all their works, was a good effect; and nothing could have a worse than this. We therefore find, that in sculpture, they attempted not to mark their distances, otherwise, than by a simple diminution of the Relievo; but, left to  
painting,

painting, what sculpture could not assume, the deception of the Clear obscure.

B. YET, from this, which was an instance of their good sense, has been drawn an argument of their ignorance; and, because they did not force the laws of the Clear obscure into sculpture, to which they are aliens; it has been inferred, that they knew not their connection with painting, out of which they naturally grow.

A. I HAVE, I think, both from reason and authority, proved the weakness of this supposition; but, should you still have the least doubt, the testimony of Virtruvius must intirely remove it. By this, it will appear, that the Greek painters, not only knew the rules and studied the effects of perspective; but that their greatest philosophers, and mathematicians, thought it worthy their attention, to reduce these ef-



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 fects to sure and determined laws. “[e] Aga-  
 “ tharcus was the first who painted a scene,  
 “ at the time when Æschylus exhibited his  
 “ tragedies at Athens: He has left a com-  
 “ mentary on this subject. From this hint,  
 “ Democritus and Anaxagoras wrote on  
 “ perspective; explaining, in what manner  
 “ we should, agreeable to the appearances  
 “ in nature, from a central point, make the  
 “ lines to correspond with the eye, and the  
 “ direction of the visual rays: So that, from  
 “ a seeming confusion, may result a natural  
 “ effect; and the scene become a true re-  
 “ presentation of buildings: And, that

[e] Agatharcus primum, Athenis Æschylo docente  
 tragoediam, scenam fecit; et de eâ re commentarium  
 reliquit: Ex eo moniti Democritus et Anaxagoras, de  
 eadem re scripserunt, quemadmodum oporteat ad aci-  
 em oculorum, radiorumque extensionem, certo loco  
 centro constituto, ad lineas naturali ratione respon-  
 dere; uti de incertâ re, certæ imagines ædificiorum  
 in scenarum picturis redderent speciem; et quæ in di-  
 rectis planisque frontibus sint figuratæ, alia abscedentia,  
 alia prominentia esse videantur. In Præf. lib. vii.

“ those

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“ those objects which are drawn on a perpendicular plane, may appear, some retiring from the eye, others advancing towards it.” You will observe on this passage, that the painter was before-hand with the philosopher; and by imitating the various effects of vision, had worked himself into the mystery of its laws. So that in this, as in many other cases, practice, instead of being the child, was the parent of science.

B. YOU have fully vindicated the science of the ancients in the particular before us, and dissipated that cloud, with which the vanity of the moderns had obscured it; I am afraid, the more we examine any pretended advantage over them, the less reason we shall find to triumph,

A. HAVING thus given a sketch of the three principal objects of the Clear obscure;

it will be sufficient to mention the fourth, as it seems to spring of itself from a just exertion of the former; I mean the union of the Clear obscure. This is, when the particular accidents of lights and shades so co-operate, as to produce, in the general, a fine effect; and that the picture sends forth such a proportion of light, as is most pleasing to the eye, and advantageous to its several objects. Of this, if I understand him right, Pliny speaks in the following passage.

“[f] Now splendor was added, this is a “different thing from light; but, being “the result of light and shade, it was there- “fore called the tone.” And Plutarch, speaking of the painting of Dionysius [g], uses force and the tone as synonymous; and

[f] *Adjectus est splendor, alius hic quam lumen: quem, quia inter hoc et umbram esset, appellaverunt TONON.* Lib. xxxv. 5.

[g] *Τα Διονυσίου ζωγραφηματα, ισχυρ ἐχούτα καὶ τόνον.*  
Plutarch in Timoleonte.

with

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with reason, as it is this accord or harmony of the Clear obscure, that gives to painting its first and striking effect. This it is that enchants us, in the Nativity, and other pieces of Correggio; and to represent its power in the strongest light, I need but observe, that where this is, we are charmed by a Caravaggio; where it is wanting, we look coldly on a Raphael.

B. I HAVE often thought, when I have had before me a painting of the Roman school, that it was like looking at a prospect in a gloomy day: The beauties of nature are there; but they want that, which should illumine and embellish them. The union of the Clear obscure, such as you have described it, is the fun of picture.

A. You have expressed it justly; for it is not only pleasing in its general effect, but gives vigour and warmth to each particular

object; and bestows on them, like the breath of Venus, the *letos honores*, those gladsome beauties, which raise them above the condition of an ordinary appearance.

B. WHEN I considered how little satisfaction I had received on this subject, from the writings of the moderns, I did not imagine that you could ever clear this obscurity, by lights borrowed from those of the ancients; especially, as I have been accustomed to believe, [*b*] that their painters were but superficially, if at all, versed in this branch of their art. You have explained so fully the different powers and merits

[*b*] Some have asserted roundly, that the ancients were unacquainted with the Clear obscure; others (who consider, that a certain degree of it is inseparable from the very nature of painting) suppose, that, what they knew of it, was nothing more than the mere effect of imitation; without principles or science. Had this been the case, is it to be imagined, that so judicious a critic as Cicero, would have spoken of the

of



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of the Clear obscure, that I think, in order to have a reasonable degree of knowledge in this matter, we need do no more, than apply those observations to the paintings of the Venetian and Lombard schools. But yet, as in treating of this subject, you have mentioned Raphael and Correggio; and seemed to set them in contrast one to the other; it would be a further satisfaction, should you mark more particularly, in what that difference consists.

*A.* IT should seem, that in the Clear obscure, Raphael knew no part but the imitative; we find the cast of his lights and shades, to be no other, than the casual ef-

lights and shades of eloquence; or proposed the conduct of painters in the Clear obscure, as worthy the imitation of orators? The passage is as follows, and merits a particular attention: Sed habeat tamen illa in dicendo admiratio, ac summa laus umbram aliquam, et recessum, quo magis id, quod erit *illuminatum*, exstare, atque eminere videatur. De Oratore, lib. iii.

fect

fect of the disposition of his figures. Correggio, on the other hand, is intirely ideal ; and considers the disposition of his figures, merely as it tends to produce a better effect of Clear obscure. It is no wonder therefore, that science should be superior to accident.

RAPHAEL's system, in the composition of his history, was simple and uniform ; it consisted wholly in placing his strongest lights foremost, and giving them a gradual diminution into the fond. Hence, most frequently, his figures in the first plane are dressed in white ; a practice, which he learned from the Florentine school : But Correggio, and the Lombard school, put forward the pure and unmixed colours ; such as red, yellow, and blue ; observing that the white has an effect [*i*] too transparent

[*i*] For this reason Titian brought forward his obscures, and threw his clears into the back ground. This may appear to counteract the principle I at first and

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and weak. This method of Raphael, such as I have described it, answers fully in giving a roundness to his foremost figures; but it is weak in its general effect: He knew not the powers of the different colours, still less, the beauties which they communicate and receive from each other. Correggio was a master of both; he not only knew their just balance and reciprocal influence, but extends this knowledge even to their shades. Thus, you may distinguish in a painting of his, the shade of a rose coloured drapery, from that of a red; as you may, the shade of a clear white, from that of one more obscure. It is easy to conceive, what advantages, an uncommon genius, and elegant imagination, must draw from such resources as these; hence springs that

laid down; but, as the clears and obscures fly from each other, they mutually serve, according as they are placed, to throw each other forward, or at a distance.

warmth,

warmth, that variety, that magic, which enchants the eye, and prepossesses the understanding: For, certainly we do not judge of Correggio as of other painters; prejudiced by the charms of his Clear obscure, grimace sometimes passes for beauty, affectation for grace; it is by this that he always gains his end, which is to please; and we view his works with a predilection, which doubles his beauties, and blinds us to his errors.

*B.* FROM this representation of the merit of Correggio, are we not to look upon it rather as fantastical than real? Does it not operate more, by seducing the eye, than satisfying the judgment?

*A.* THIS seduction is no small merit in a painter; it is an union of the mechanic and ideal; it is the power of realizing his conceptions; from which, however, we  
should

DIAL. VI. *Of the CLEAR OBSCURE.* 125

should receive little pleasure, were not those conceptions in themselves pleasing; for the Flemish artists, are in this equal, if not superior to any; but their aims are vulgar: But Correggio is, in general, amiable in his ideas, and happy in his expressions; he was more constant in his pursuit of grace than of beauty; hence he as often out-runs the one, as he falls short of the other; but the splendor of his Clear obscure overbears our censure; and he is to us, what Apelles was to the ancients, the standard of the amiable and the graceful.

B. MIGHT we not, by blending the Clear obscure of Correggio, with the composition of Raphael, form to ourselves an image of perfect painting?

A. IT cannot be denied, that, had the latter been more knowing in this branch of his art, his paintings would have had a much better



better effect; and yet, nothing is more natural, than that the event should be such as we find it. The ideas of Correggio, tending ever to please, led him, of course, to the discovery of the means productive of his aim; Raphael, on the other hand, while he was busied in tracing the passions, and intent on determining their movements, was naturally led by the severity of his pursuit into a simplicity, or perhaps, a neglect of colouring. The reasonableness of this conclusion, is confirmed by an example from antiquity; Aristides, who was probably the most ethic of all their painters, was, as we are told by Pliny, rather hard in his colouring.

B. HOWEVER general the case may be, it does not prove that the things are in themselves discordant; on the contrary, you have satisfied me in the characters of Apelles and Parrhasius, that they may very  
 2 well

well exist in one and the same artist. Can a painter be excusable ; who is weak in the most essential part of his art, namely, that which gives reality to his imitations ? His aim, in general, may not be to flatter the eye ; but, it should be always to satisfy our feeling. He may think justly, and convey his thoughts clearly ; yet, his work is but a *sbozzo*, till, by colouring and the Clear obscure, it puts on the semblance of truth. But, exclusive of the good effect of this science in the general, there are particular cases, in which it is indispensable ; as, in the representations of heavenly and ærial beings : When these, instead of being suspended in a bright and diaphanous glory, are nailed to a muddy fond, or wade thro', the obstructions of a heavy dawbing, we are offended at the impropriety of their appearance ; and the first thought we have, is, to wonder how they came there.

A. THE

A. THE imagination enlightened by the warm and glowing images which it receives from the poets, bears with impatience those gloomy and ponderous bodies, with which our painters people their heavens. The defect of education in our artists, is no where so sensible, as on these occasions ; what fire might a painter catch from the following description ;

*Nor delay'd the winged saint  
After his charge receiv'd ; but from among  
Thousand celestial ardors, where he stood  
Veil'd with his gorgeous wings, up springing light  
Flew thro' the midst of Heaven*

Par. Lost, book v. ver. 247.

What an effect of clear obscure is hinted in these lines ?

*Haste hither, Eve, and worth thy sight behold,  
Eastward among those trees, what glorious shape*  
Comes

*Comes this way moving; seems another morn  
Ris'n on midnoon.*

Par. Lost, book v. ver. 308.

The Italian painters have no excuse. Ariosto and Tasso abound with beautiful and picturesque ideas. There is not, perhaps, a finer image in poetry, than the following one by Tasso.

*“ Così dicendo, fiammeggió di zelo  
“ Per gli occhio fuor del mortal uso accensi :  
“ Poi nel profondo de' suoi rai si chiuse,  
“ E sparve. Canto xii. Stanza 93.*

What a subject for a fine colourist, to delineate the form of an angel, retiring and melting into the splendor which surrounds it?

B. THE painting of Correggio alone verges on these poetic ideas : We acknowledge in his angels the inhabitants of heaven; crayoned in splendor, pellucid in  
K glory.

glory, their clear and animated tints breathe a divinity; they flit in air, like the skirtings of a passing cloud, they drop from heaven, like rain through an April sun.

A. ONE would imagine that Pope had been animated with the spirit of Correggio, and had taken possession of his pencil, when he thus pictured his sylphs:

*Some in the fields of purest æther play,  
And bask and whiten in the blaze of day.*

Men of a superior genius, view nature through the same medium, a fine imagination; so that, however different their arts may be in the mechanic part, they will often approach each other in the ideal. Of all the arts, poetry and painting are the most congenial; and we may observe, that as the former never appears more lovely, than when she dresses herself in the beauties of painting; so, the latter is never so transporting,



porting, as when she emulates the flights, and catches the images of poetry.

*B.* WHAT you have said in this place of Correggio, is much to his advantage; but, you just now treated him rather slightly on the article of *Beauty*; a merit, applied to him by others as peculiar and distinctive: I am at a loss to account for this opposition of sentiments. A Greek philosopher being asked, what was Beauty? Answered, This was the [*k*] question of a blind man; yet I am tempted to subject myself to the same rebuke; for without some explanation of this matter, we must ever, in our judgments on painters, contradict, or talk unintelligibly to one another.

*A.* I SHOULD think such beauty absolute, in which we should find, a purity of colours, an elegance in the proportions, har-

[*k*] τυφλου το ερωτημα.

K 2

mony

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mony of features, and happiness of character.

*B.* EXCUSE me a minute ; what do you mean in this place by character ?

*A.* I MEAN that emanation of the mind, which marks its peculiar complexion ; which inspires the features, graces the action, and gives to the whole person a particular aim and significance. Hence the poet,

*Thus doth beauty dwell  
There most conspicuous, e'en in outward shape,  
Where dawns the high expression of a mind.*

Pl. of the Im.

Now the reason why we differ so much in our judgments on beauty, is, that in the use of this word, we annex to it, some more, some fewer of the forementioned ideas ; as each man differs from another, in the cast of his imagination, or the justness of his eye.

Thus

Thus one, much delighted with the pure and vivid tints of Titian, shall with difficulty acknowledge beauty in the gross complexions of Raphael, however elegant the proportions, or happy the character. A second, to whom harmony of features fills his conception of beauty, shall admire Carlo-Maratte; to the surprise of those, who feel no effect from an union of features unenlivened by expression. Opposed to this person shall be one, with whom character alone stands for beauty; thus, when a Madonna of Correggio gazes on her child, with a fondness truly maternal; or smiles delighted with his playful action; he calls that beauty, which a more correct eye (observing that the proportions are not perfectly just, and the cast of features, perhaps, even vulgar) shall admit to be nothing more than a pleasing expression. But, exclusive of these particular acceptations, we use this word in a sense still more vague and gene-

ral; for, as it is the nature of beauty, to excite in the beholders certain pleasing sensations, we apply indiscriminately the same title, to every thing which produces a like effect; and this is evidently the case, when we are flattered by the union of colours, or the charms of the Clear obscure. Thus, an ancient writer observes, “[1] That “the most opposite colours co-operate in “the formation of beauty:” A testimony, which not only serves my present purpose, but likewise, brings the paintings of the ancients into the same point of view with those of Correggio; shewing, that this last species of beauty was equally known and cultivated by both.

B. THOUGH, what you have offered, be applied only to painting, may we not extend it to common life; and account, from hence,

[1] Τα ἐναντιώτατα τῶν χρωμάτων εἰς τὴν τοῦ καλλοῦ συν-  
θηκὴν ὁμολογεῖ.

DIAL. VI. *Of the* CLEAR OBSCURE. 135

for the difference of our opinions, concerning the beauty of women ; each man esteeming her most beautiful, who most readily excites in him those sensations, which are the end of beauty ?

A. OUR British Lucretius, it should seem, thought so, when he tells us, that virtue

*Assumes a various feature, to attract  
With charms responsive to each gazers eye  
The hearts of men.*

Pl. of the Im.



## DIALOGUE VII.

## Of COMPOSITION.

A. **H**ISTORY Painting is the representation of a momentary drama : We may therefore, in treating of composition, borrow our ideas from the stage ; and divide it into two parts, the scenery, and the drama. The excellence of the first, consists in a pleasing disposition of the figures which compose the action : However trifling the pleasure we receive from this may appear to some, it is certain, that it is founded on nature, and of course must merit our attention : If we look in a clear night on a starry sky, our eyes presently fix on those parts, where the stars are (if I may so term

term it) grouped into constellations. The mind, indifferent to a loose unideal dispersion, seeks for something of system and œconomy; and catches at every image of contrivance and design. Perhaps too, there may be something of harmony in a particular arrangement of objects; similar to that, which strikes us, in the correspondence of sounds, or flatters us, in the union of colours.

*B.* WHATEVER the principal may be, we cannot doubt of the effect. The eye charmed with the elegant distribution of a Lanfranc, or Pietro di Cortona, looks with coldness on the scattered compositions of a Domenichino; and often wishes for something more flattering in those of the great Raphael.

*A.* YOUR observation, so far as it touches Raphael, shews the necessity of a distinction  
in

in this place. The disposition, of which we have been speaking hitherto, is purely picturesque : But there is a second kind, which we may call the expressive. When many persons are present at an action, in which they are interested, it naturally sets them in motion ; their movements will depend on their characters and feeling ; anger, love, or astonishment, shall with propriety be expressed by single figures ; whilst others shall be collected into parties, or groupes, to communicate their fears, doubts, belief, and the like. Thus, in that inimitable picture by Leonardo da Vinci, when Christ, at supper with his disciples, declares, that one of them shall betray him ; they all instantly take the alarm : One of the youngest, rising from his seat, his hands crossed on his breast, looks on Christ with an action full of love and attachment to his person ; the zealous and impatient St. Peter, throws himself a-cro's two or three others,

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others and whispers the beloved disciple, who is next to Christ; no doubt, to ask his master who it should be. The rest are divided into parties, reasoning and disputing on their different sentiments. It is easy to perceive, that the artist, intent on giving a full expression to the sentiments and passions becoming the occasion, considered the disposition of his picture, merely, as it tended to explain or add force to his principal action. This will ever be the case with the greatest painters: They may set a just value on the scenery of their piece, but never sacrifice to that the expression of their subject. When Christ gives the keys to Peter, nothing is more natural, than that the disciples should all crowd together, to be witnesses of an action which so much concerned them. This disposition is true and expressive, but by no means picturesque: Raphael was too wise, to flatter the eye, at the expence of the understanding; yet,  
where

where they could both be indulged with propriety, his composition was no less picturesque than expressive. In his St. Paul preaching at Athens, the disposition in general is not only pleasing, but the groupes are well imaged, and happily connected. In short, the true difference between these artists; is this, with Raphael and Leonardo da Vinci, disposition is an accessory; with Lanfranc and Pietro di Cortona, it is not only a principal, but comprehends too often the whole merit of the picture.

*B.* HAVING settled our ideas of this part which you call the scenery of painting; let us, if you please, examine the merit of the ancients in this article: It is the received opinion, I think, that their compositions in painting, like those of their basso Relievo's, were extremely simple; if so, I cannot expect much from you on this head.

*A.* THIS



A. THIS opinion, is a necessary consequence of that, which I have already mentioned, namely, that they were unacquainted with the laws of perspective, and the effects of the clear obscure. If the contrary of this be true, which, it seems to me, I have proved; we may very well conclude, that, possessed of the same means with the moderns, and at least equal to them in genius, they should employ them to the same ends. Was their composition so simple as it is thought, there could be, in this particular, no variety in the art, and, of course, no degrees of merit in the artists. Yet, we are told by Pliny, “ [1] That Apelles confessed “ Amphion to be his superior in the disposition: It was then an object of attention; it must have been too, in the opinion of the ancients, of consequence; for, the

[1] Cedebat Amphioni de Dispositione.

historian gives it as an extraordinary instance of [*m*] candor in the painter. It is probable then, that, as Apelles was the Raphael, so Amphion was the Lanfranc of Greece.

*B.* I AM inclined to believe from hence, that the first painters among the ancients, like those among the moderns, were, as it is natural they should be, more studious of the expressive than the picturesque; and this may be the reason why the classic writers, who borrowed their ideas of painting from their capital works, have not dwelt on the article of disposition; looking on it as a circumstance inseparable from the general expression of the subject.

*A.* AND yet they are not altogether silent on this head: And we may find, even in

[*m*] Fuit Apelles non minoris simplicitatis quam artis; nam cedebat, &c. Lib. xxxv. c. 10.

them

them, sufficient lights to satisfy those, who set out with a good opinion of the taste and genius of the ancients. Plutarch tells us, that Euphranor painted the engagement of the cavalry at the battle of Mantinea, [n] as if he had been inspired. The painter had never merited such singular praise, had he not wrought his subject to the nearest semblance to truth; and that this could not have been without a particular attention to the disposition, the same writer proves in another instance; when, speaking of the battle fought by Arastus against the Etolians, he adds, that Timanthes the painter, brought this action, as it were, before the eyes of the beholders, by the [o] *evidence of his disposition*. Thus, it is plain, that the Inspiration of Euphranor, and the evidence of Timanthes, flowed from the same excellence, an

[n] Ουκ ανεθουσιασας.

De Gloria Athen. p. 346. Ed. Paris.

[o] Εμφαντικως τη διαθεσει.

In Arato, p. 1042.

union of the two kinds of disposition, the expressive, and the picturesque.

*B.* HAVING thus raised the curtain and examined the scenery, let us proceed to what you call the drama of painting.

*A.* IT was with great propriety so termed by the ancients; because, like a dramatic poem, it contains, first, a subject, or fable; secondly, its order, or contrivance; thirdly, characters, or the manners: Fourthly, the various passions which spring from those characters. Philostratus, speaking of the composition of a picture, calls it in express terms the [*p*] drama of the painter: Pliny has [*q*] the same idea, to his commendation of Nichophanes. But we shall be better satisfied of the justness of this application,

[*p*] Το δράμα του ζωγράφου.

[*q*] Cothurnus ei, et gravitas artis.

by

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by examples, than by authorities. [r] It was the opinion of Nicias, one of the greatest of the Greek painters, that the subject was of no less consequence in painting, than the fable in poetry; and, of course, that great and noble actions tended to elevate and enlarge, as the contrary must humble and contract the genius of the painter. The ancients had great advantages in this particular; they had, not only their profane history, rich in the most glorious and interesting events; but their sacred, whilst it furnished them with new ideas of the sublime, gave no check to the pathetic. Their gods, superior in grace, majesty and beauty, were yet subject to all the feelings and passions of humanity. How unequal is the lot of the modern artists? employed by priests, or princes who thought like priests, their sub-

[r] Ωλο γαρ και την υποθεσιν αυτην μέρος ειναι της ζωγραφικης τεχνης, ωσπερ τους μυθους των ποιητων.

Dem. Phal. de eloc. § 76.

L

jects



jects are, for the most part, taken from a religion, which professes to banish, or subdue the passions: Their characters are borrowed from the lowest spheres of life: Men, in whom, meanness of birth, and simplicity of manners, were the best titles to their election. Even their divine master, is no where, in painting, attended with a great idea; his long strait hair, Jewish beard, and poor apparel, would undignify the most exalted nature, humility and resignation, his characteristics, are qualities extremely edifying, but by no means picturesque. Let us, for example, compare (I must be understood to mean only as subjects for painting) a Christ armed with a scourge, driving the money-changers out of the temple, to an Alexander, the thunder in his hand, ready to dart it on the rebellious nations. It is not in the sublime alone, that their subjects are deficient; they are equally so in the pathetic: The sufferings, which they mostly represent,

are

are in obedience to prophecies and the will of heaven ; they are often the choice of the sufferers ; and a ten-fold premium is at hand. When St. Andrew falls down to worship the cross, on which he is soon after to be nailed ; we may be improved by such an example of piety and zeal ; but we cannot feel for one, who is not concerned for himself. We are not so calm at the sacrifice of Iphigenia ; beautiful, innocent, and unhappy ; we look upon her as the victim of an unjust decree ; she might live the object of universal love ; she dies the object of universal pity. This defect in the subject, and of habitude in the painters, accounts for the coldness, with which, we look in general on their works in the galleries and churches ; the genius of painting wasting its powers on crucifixions, holy families, last suppers, and the like, wants nerves, if at any time the subject calls for the pathetic or sublime : Of this we have an instance

in the transfiguration by Raphael ; a Christ uplifted by a divine energy, dilating in glory, and growing into divinity, was a subject truly sublime ; it is easy to see, on this occasion, that the painter had not that enthusiastic spirit, or those ideas of majesty, which the subject required : Accordingly, his pencil is timid and unequal : It is not so, when he drops to the bottom of the mount, to express the various feelings and sentiments of the disciples, distressed at their inability to work a miracle in their masters absence. The truth was, his calm, though fertile genius, could better delineate the fine and delicate movements of the mind, which have in them more of sentiment than passion. This was his true sphere, and it is here, that we must study, and admire Raphael.

*B.* YOUR observations on the character of Raphael, show, how essential to painting is that, which you call the third part of the drama,

drama, namely, the characters or manners.

A. THE ancients thought them so much so, that they expressly term picture [s] an art descriptive of the manners. Aristotle in his poetics, says of Polygnotus, that he was a [t] painter of the manners; and objects to Zeuxis his weakness in this part. We have in Philostratus the following description of a picture; “[u] We may instantly (says he) distinguish Ulysses, by his severity and vigilance; Menelaus, by

[s] Ἡθοποιῆτος τέχνη. Callistratus in Descrip. stat. Æscul.

[t] Ἡθογραφος.

Aristides Thebanus animum pinxit, et sensus omnes expresseit, quos vocant Græci ἦθη; id est, perturbationes. Plin. lib. xxxv. 10.

[u] Ἐπιδηλος ὁ μὲν Ἰθακησιος, ἀπο τοῦ στρυφίου καὶ ἐγχεγορέας, ὁ δὲ Ἀγαμέμνων, ἀπο τοῦ ἐνθεοῦ, τὸν δὲ τοῦ Τυδείας ἐλευθερία γράφει, γινώριζοι; δ’ ἂν καὶ τὸν Τελαμώνιον, ἀπο τοῦ βλοσσηροῦ, καὶ τὸν Λοκρον ἀπο τοῦ ἱτοιμοῦ. Philostrat. in Antilocho.

“his mildness; and Agamemnon, by a  
 “kind of divine majesty; in the son of  
 “Tydeus, is expressed an air of freedom;  
 “Ajax is known by his fullen fierceness;  
 “and Antilochus by his alertness.” To  
 give to these such sentiments and actions, as  
 are consequential from their peculiar charac-  
 ters, is [*x*] the ethic of painting. We may  
 judge from hence, how advantageous it must  
 be to painters in general, to be versed in  
 classical subjects; for, they find themselves  
 under a necessity of expressing the manners  
 as they flow naturally from characters pre-  
 determined. The [*y*] Greek painters caught  
 their ideas from historians and poets, and  
 translated the beauties of eloquence into  
 paint.

*B.* How wonderful must have been that  
 genius, which, without these advantages,

[*x*] *Ἡθων ἰσχυρία.* Callist. in Descrip. stat. Narcissi.

[*y*] *Apelles pinxit Dianam sacrificantium virginum  
 choro mistam; quibus vicisse Homeri versus videtur,  
 id ipsum describentis.* Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 10.

has



has all their effects? Such was our divine Raphael: He treats new subjects; he invents new characters: The most unpicturesque action, composed by him, seems to have been destined for paint: Christ gives the keys to Peter; how barren the incident! yet his pencil, like the rod of Moses, strikes a spring out of this rock.

*A.* You have described that facility, which is the gift of genius, and the image of truth: This does not consist wholly, as may be imagined, in the ready execution of a conceived idea; but in the immediate perception of the justness of that idea; in a consummate knowledge of the human heart, its various affections, and the just measure of their influence on our looks and gestures; easy in promise, but difficult of execution; unknown, unattainable by the herd of painters, it drops from the pencil of a Raphael, Correggio, or Leonardo da Vinci. This

quality was considered by the ancients as the surest test of genius; thus Plutarch praises the paintings of [z] Nicomachus, comparing them, in happiness and facility, to the poetry of Homer. Apelles affirmed himself inferior in some points to other painters; but in this unrivalled. If we except the three, I just now mentioned, we should in vain look for this knowledge, in the crowd of modern painters. Contented with tolerable drawing, some air of beauty, and a good cast of drapery, they abandon character to the accident of features; their dramatic personæ, if we can call them such, are like the followers of Æneas, many actors with one face, *fortemque Gyam, fortemque Cloanthum*; the different echoes of one poor idea: Such characters are so far from grow-

[z] Ταις δὲ Νικομαχοῦ γραφαῖς καὶ τοῖς Ὅμηρου στίχοις, μίαν τῆς ἀλλῆς δυναμείας καὶ χαρίτος, προσεσι το δοκεῖν εὐχερῶς καὶ ῥαδίως ἀπειργαῖσθαι. In Tim. Oleonte, p. 253. Ed. Paris.

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ing out of the subject, that they have always the air of Exotics, and seem fitter for any spot than that in which they are. Instead of placing the Bacchus and Ariadne of Carache, in a triumphal car; we might put the mistress into a cart, and set her lover to drive it.

*B.* THE professors of the art, who praise so warmly the paintings in the palace Farnese, should distinguish better the mechanic part from the ideal. I have never seen them without regretting, that such a hand to execute should have been so ill prompted. A composition of this kind, though it be rich in all the other powers of paint, if it has neither beauty nor characters becoming the subjects, will be considered by a judicious observer, rather as the furniture than ornament of a gallery.

*A.* To

*A.* To represent a Juno without majesty, or a Venus without beauty, is an insult on our understandings; the peacock and dove, are not the means of distinction we look for : The [*a*] Juno of Polycletus is described by Maximus Tyrius, with snow white arms, ivory shoulders, beautiful eyes, in royal robes, of a majestic mien, and seated on a throne of gold.

*B.* THE modern statuaries are so wholly void of character, that they are not to be

[*a*] *Ἡραν, οἷαν Πολυκλείδης Ἀργείοις εἰδείξει, λευκῶλινον, ἐλεφανόπηχυν, ευώπιν, ευειμόνα, βασιλικήν, ἰδρυμένην ἐπὶ χρυσοῦ θρόνου.* Dissert. xiv.

The same statue is celebrated by Martial in the following epigram :

Juno, labor, Polyclete, tuus, et gloria felix,  
Phidiacæ cuperent quam meruisse manus;  
Ore nitet tanto, quanto superasset in Idæ  
Judice convictas non dubitante Deas.  
Junonem, Polyclete, suam nisi frater amaret,  
Junonem poterat frater amare tuam.

Lib. x. Epig. 89.  
mentioned

mentioned on this subject; even our best painters are not so accurate as we could wish: Domenichino, who excels in painting children, often gives them expressions which no ways become their age.

A. THE truth was, he had but one expression to give them, which was that of fear; so that, right or wrong, they must be frightened; he might have learned from Parrhasius, that an innocent security was often their truest characteristic; *pinxit pueros duos, in quibus spectatur securitas, et ætatis simplicitas*, Plin. The Greek artists, not only excelled the moderns in the propriety of their characters, they were sometimes superior even to their own poets; let us compare the Vulcan of Homer, with that of Alcamenes; the first, at a banquet of the gods, limps along the buffoon of the company; “the second is praised by Cicero,  
“[b] for



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“[*b*] for that his lameness was marked so  
“mildly, that it did not disgrace him.”  
It must be confessed, that the statuary is by  
far more decent than the poet.

WE have thus far considered character in  
its calm expression of the manners; let us  
now trace it in its more turbulent effects,  
the passions: It is observed by Tully, “[*c*]  
“That every motion of the mind, has from  
“nature its peculiar countenance. [*d*] Do  
“not you see, says Seneca, what vigor is  
“given to the eye by fortitude? what  
“steadiness by wisdom; what modesty,

[*b*] *Athenis laudamus Vulcanum eum quem fecit  
Alcámenes, in quo stante atque vestito, leniter apparet  
claudicatio non deformis. De Nat. Deor. lib. i.*

[*c*] *Omnis enim motus animi suum quendam a na-  
tura habet vultum. De Oratore, lib. iii.*

[*d*] *An non vides quantum oculis det vigorem  
fortitudo? quantam intensionem prudentia? quan-  
tam modestiam et quietem reverentia? quantam sere-  
nitatem letitia? quantum rigorem severitas? quan-  
tam remissionem hilaritas? Ep. cvi.*

“ what

“ what stillness it puts on in the expression  
 “ of an awful respect? how it is bright-  
 “ ened by joy? how fixed by severity,  
 “ how relaxed by mirth?” If so much of  
 the inward habit of our minds is to be col-  
 lected from this intelligence of the eyes, how  
 much more may be traced in the general  
 tenor of the countenance, in its agreement  
 with the agitations of the body, the move-  
 ments of the limbs, and all the various in-  
 dications of action? To catch these symp-  
 toms of our inward feelings, to give them  
 their just measure of expression, and render,  
 if I may so express myself, the soul visible,  
 is the great end of dramatic painting.

B. I HAVE often thought, on examining  
 the *Laocoon* by parts, that, had the foot  
 only been discovered, the swelled veins, the  
 strained sinews, and the irregular motion of  
 the muscles, might have led us into a con-  
 ception of those tortures, which are so di-  
 vinely

vinely expressed in the face, so wonderfully marked throughout the whole body.

*A.* THE ancients are no less remarkable for their spirit in conceiving the primary idea, than for their patience in pursuing it in all its consequences: The [*e*] expression in this statue, is worked up to such a just extremity, their reigns through it such an air of truth, that, as the least addition would be extravagance, so every diminution would be a defect: We trace in it the labour of years, we feel from it the impression of a minute. The statuaries of Greece had no other advantage over its painters, than that they used more durable materials, blessed with equal genius, formed by the same education, their arts went hand in hand to perfection. If Praxiteles be celebrated by Di-

[*e*] Opus omnibus et picturæ et statuariæ artis præferendum. Plin.

odorus

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odorus Siculus, [f] for having transfused into marble all the passions of the soul; the same power is attributed by Pliny to the pencil of Aristides; it is not probable, that men of taste and letters, whilst they were eye-witnesses of the divine character in the Apollo; of the beauty and tenderness of the Venus; and the wonderful expression of the Laocoon; should celebrate those very qualities in the works of their painters, were they not eminently possessed of them. Pliny, [g]

[f] Ὁ καλαμῆας ἀκρῶς τοῖς λιθινοῖς ἐργαῖς τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς παθεῖ.

[g] Timanthi vel plurimum affuit ingenii: Ejus enim est Iphigenia oratorum laudibus celebrata; quæ stante ad aras periturâ, cum mœitos pinxisset omnes, præcipue patrum, cum tristitiæ omnem imaginem consumfisset, Patris ipsius vultum velavit, quem digne non ptoerat ostendere. Lib. xxxv. c. 10.

It has been imagined that Timanthes borrowed this thought from the following passage in Sophocles :

— Ως δ' εἰσεῖδεν Ἀγαμέμνων ἀναξ

Ἐπὶ σφαγῆς τειχουσιν εἰς αἰσος κορὴν,

Ἀνεστραξε· κόμπησιν σρεψαῖς καρα,

Δακρυὰ προσηγεν, οἰμάλων πεπλον προθεῖς.

in

in his description of that famous picture of the Sacrifice of Iphigenia, by Timanthes, observes, "that the painter having exhausted every image of grief in the by-standers and above all in the uncle; threw a veil over the face of the father, whose sorrow he was unable to express." If the ingenious Timanthes has left us to conceive an idea, which he could not execute, Aristides, on the other hand, has executed that which is almost above conception; by him was painted "[b] a town taken by storm, in which was seen an infant creeping to the breast of its mother, who, though expiring from her wounds, yet expresses an apprehension and fear lest the course of her milk being stopt, the child should suck her blood." What a perfect know-

[b] Hujus pictura est, oppido capto, ad matris morientis e vulnere mammam adrepens infans: Intelligiturque sentire mater, et timere, ne emortuo lacte sanguinem infans lambat, Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 10.

ledge



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ledge of the human soul must this painter have had, to enter thus feelingly into her inmost workings ! What a power, next to creative, to make such tender movements sensible in the midst of tortures ; and the mother's fondness distinguishable through the agonies of death ? This picture, it is probable, gave occasion to the following epigram [i].

*Suck, little wretch, whilst yet thy mother lives,  
Suck the last drop her fainting bosom gives.  
She dies ; her tenderness outlasts her breath,  
And her fond love is provident in death.*

The Philoctetes of Parrhasius is a fine image of hopeless wretchedness, of consuming grief. The picture itself is happily described by the

[i] Ἐλκε, ταλαν, παρὰ μητρος ὃν οὐκ εἰς μᾶζον ἀμειξεις,  
Ἐλκυσον ὕδατιον ναμα καλαφθιμενη.

Ἡδὴ γὰρ ξιφεισσι λιποπνεος ἄλλα τὰ μητρος  
Φιλτρα καὶ εἰν αἰδῇ παιδοκομεῖν εμαθον.

Anthol. lib. iii.

M

epigram.

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 epigrammatist, and the compliment to the  
 painter, has the elegance and simplicity pec-  
 culiar to the Greeks [k].

*Drawn by Parrhasius, as in person view'd,  
 Sad Philoctetes feels his pains renew'd.  
 In his parch'd eyes the deep-sunk tears express  
 His endless misery, his dire distress.  
 We blame thee, painter, tho' thy art commend;  
 'Twas time his sufferings with himself should end.*

We cannot well conceive an image more  
 tender, or more affecting than this. Let  
 terror be united with pity, the muse of  
 painting has completed her drama. Of this,  
 the Ajax and Medea of Timomachus are

[k] Και τον απο Τερηχμιος ιδων πολυιδυνοι ηρω  
 Τονδε Φιλοκίτην εγραφε Παρρασιος.  
 Εν τε γαρ οφθαλμοις εσκληηκοσι κωφον υποικει  
 Δακρυ, και ο τρυχω ενος ενος ποιος.  
 Ζωογραφων ω λωσι, συ μιν σεφος, αλλ' αναπαισαι  
 Ανδρα ποιων ηδη τον πολυμοχθον εδει.

*Anthol. lib. iv.*

*beautiful*

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beautiful examples; they are but just mentioned by Ovid in the following lines [1] :

*Here Ajax sits with sullen rage oppress'd.*

*And in Medea's eyes her crime's confess'd.*

Philostratus is more particular as to the former: [m] We cannot (says he) do justice to the Ajax of Timomachus, whom he represents distracted, unless we previously form in our minds the image of his condition: and how natural it was, after the follies he had committed, that he should sit down, overwhelmed with shame, entering on the resolution to destroy himself. This obser-

[1] Utque sedet vultu fassus Telamonius iram;  
Inque oculis facinus barbara mater habet.

Lib. ii. Trist.

[m] Οὐδ' αὖ τὸν Αἰάντα τις τοῦ Τιμόμαχου ἀγαθῶς, ὅς  
δὴ ἀναγεγραμμένος αὐτῷ μεμνητός, εἰ μὴ ἀναλάβῃ τις ἐς το-  
ιοῦτον Αἰάντος εἰδῶλον, καὶ ὡς εἰκός αὐτοῦ ἀπεικονίσῃ τὰ ἐν τῇ  
Τροίᾳ βουκόλια, καθησθῇ ἀπειρηκόλια, βούλην ποιοῦμενος  
καὶ ταῦτος κτείνειν. Lib. ii. de vita Apollonii, c. 10.

vation of the historian, will serve us as a comment on the epigrammatist [n].

*Here art with nature holds a doubtful strife,  
And summons Ajax to a second life :  
We see thee raging, and in every line  
The painter's fury rises still with thine :  
Thy looks the anguish of thy soul disclose,  
And the mix'd tear is charged with all thy woes.*

The Medea was a subject of emulation to the wits of Greece ; each contending to do justice to those inimitable expressions, which they thus describe [o] :

*Medea, painter, now provokes thy skill,  
Hop'st thou to picture a divided will ?*

[n] Αἶσαν Τιμομαχὸν πλεον ἢ πάρος ἤπασε τέχνη  
Τὴν φύσιν. Ὁ γράψας εἶδε σε μαινόμενον,  
Καὶ συνελυσσέθη χεὶρ ἀνερὶ· Καὶ τὰ κεράσα  
Δακρυὰ τοὺς λυπῆς παύλας ἐμίξε πόνους.

Anthol. lib. iv.

[o] Τὰν ὅλαν Μηδεῖαν ὅτ' ἐγράφε Τιμομαχὸν χεὶρ  
Ζαλῶ, καὶ τέχνῳις ἀνιμεβέλομεναι·

*Tis*

'Tis done : Behold, united by his art  
 The lovers frenzy, and the mother's heart ;  
 Mark how the strugglings of her soul appear ;  
 Here fury flashes, and there melts a tear.  
 'Twas well, her purpose only you express'd,  
 Who but Medea could support the rest ?

The same is touch'd again with great spirit  
 in the following epigram [p] :

*What ventrous hand the curs'd Medea drew?  
 And brought the parricide once more in view !*

Μυριον ἀγαλο μοχθον ἰν' ἠθια δισσα χαράξῃ,  
 Ὡν το μὲν εἰς ὄργαν νενε, το δ' εἰς ἐλεον.  
 Ἀμφω δ' ἐπληρωσεν, ὅρα τυπον' ἐν γὰρ ἀπειλᾷ,  
 Δακρυον, ἐν δ' ἐλεῷ, θυμὸς ἀνατρεφείαι.  
 Ἀρκεί δ' αὖ μέλλησις, ἐφα σοφοῦ, αἶμα δὲ τέκνων  
 Ἐπρεπε Μηδείῃ, κ' οὐ χερί Τιμομαχου.

Anthol. lib iv.

[p] Τις σου, Κολχίς αθεσμε, συνεγραφει εἰκονι θυμῷ ;  
 Τις καὶ ἐν εἰδῶλῳ βαρεῖαρον εἰς γαστρίῳ ;  
 Αἰεὶ γὰρ διψᾷς βρεφῶν φονον' ἢ τις Ἰησῶν  
 Δευτέρως, ἢ Γλαυκῇ εἰς παλὶ σοὶ προφασίς ;  
 Ἐρρε, καὶ ἐν κρηῷ παιδοκλονε' σὼν γὰρ ἀμείρων  
 Ζηλῶν, εἰς ἃ θελεῖς, καὶ γραφίς αἰδομένηται.

Anthol. lib. iv.



*Art thou by slighted love provok'd again  
 In thy child's blood thy impious hands to stain?  
 Off murders! ev'n in paint thy crimes we fear;  
 And all the horrors of thy soul are here.*

B. IT must be confessed, that if these artists were happy in their power to please, they were no less so, in having such feeling critics, so capable of transmitting their merit to posterity. We too have our share in this happiness; these descriptions are so just, so lively, so distinguishing, that we may look upon them as copies of those divine originals. The moderns have not this advantage; all ideas of their works will vanish with their colours. When Ariosto celebrates Michael Angelo in the following line,

*"E Michael, piu che mortal, Angel divino."*

this praise is excessive, not decisive; it carries no idea.

A. THE

A. THE reason is obvious, the artist did not furnish the poet with any. Had the painters of Italy produced such expressions as those of the Ajax and Medea, the wits of that country, would not have been wanting in doing them justice. I may, perhaps, appear too general, when I include even Raphael in this observation; but if you reflect, you will find, that his expressions are more addressed to the understanding than the passions: They are more to be admired for their variety than force; they have little, either of the pathetic or sublime; and the images which they leave in the mind, slip from it, almost as hastily, as the picture from the eye. It is not so with the paintings of Timomachus and Aristides; the impressions we receive from them strike full upon the soul; they dilate it, like the bursts in the musick of Boranello; they agitate, they rouse it, like the symphonies of Yeo-

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mell: Such expressions, (as was observed of the eloquence of Pericles) leave stings behind them. The superiority which I have here attributed to the ancients, in the comparison of their excellencies with those of Raphael, is no way injurious to the latter; it is but placing his merit in a just point of view. The epithets of great and divine, so constantly bestowed upon him, carry with them every circumstance of perfection: We may be, and are often led by these into wrong judgments: Let us, if you please, examine his principal works: we have already taken notice of his conduct in the transfiguration, and of his preference of the humbler to the more exalted subject; in this he did but obey the true bias of his genius: The disciples, in the absence of their master, had attempted to dispossess a demoniac; they failed in their attempt: The painter seizes this moment to express their  
surprise

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surprize and concern at their disappointment : Their sentiments on the occasion, are finely varied : and happily adapted to their different characters. The beauties of this picture are to be felt, not described ; but yet they are beauties of an inferior order [q]. They satisfy the understanding, but they do not touch the heart.

B. As to your criticism on the transfiguration of Christ, you must consider, that to have given it its full effect, the splendors of the Clear obscure, must have co-operated with the sublime in the idea : For this reason, it is probable, Raphael did not care to engage himself too far in such a subject. Had he conceived, that he was unequal to the sublime, he never would have attempted the history of the creation.

[q] In affectibus fere plus calor, quam diligentia, valet. Quint.

A. A.

A. A SUBJECT great in conception, may become little in the execution. God the Creator, presiding in the center of the universe, and ordering by his mighty fiat, the sun and moon to break into existence, is a subject truly sublime: But, when this is represented, [r] by the figure of a man, suspended in the air, with one hand on the sun, and the other on the moon, that, which was noble to the imagination, is trifling to the eye. The immensity of our idea shrinks

[r] The littleness of this idea will best appear, by comparing it with such as are truly great,

*Ride forth, and bid the deep,  
Within appointed bounds be heaven and earth.*

And in immediate consequence,

*First in his east the glorious lamp was seen,  
Regent of day. Par. Lost.*

Such a subject as this will not admit of a mechanick image; we have a proof of this, when the same poet unhappily puts a compass into the hands of the Almighty Agent.



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to nothing, reduced to a world of a few inches. The subject, therefore, was injudiciously chosen, and poorly treated. In the same manner, when we reflect on that act, when God commanded the animals of the earth, to spring from dust into life, we are filled with the highest conception of his power ; but, when we see, in the midst of numberless beasts, an old man, with eyes of diminished lustre, a wrinkled forehead, a long beard, and his robe hanging to the ground, we may acknowledge the venerable Merlin, but we have no lines of our Creator. Such symptoms of caducity do not suit with the divine nature ; if he is to be represented, it must be, by a sublime idea, a character of majesty more than human ; such as was imagined by Homer, and executed by Phidias.

B. PLUTARCH

*B.* [*s*] PLUTARCH supposes such an idea in the Alexander of Apelles, personating Jupiter the Thunderer; which, according to this writer, was painted with such energy and truth, that it “gave occasion to a saying, that there were two Alexanders, the one of Philip, invincible; the other of Apelles, inimitable.” We learn from the same author, that Lysippus was no less ingenious than sublime, when he drew from a slight inclination of the neck, which was natural to Alexander, the hint of a great expression; representing him looking up to heaven, with that manly boldness, that commanding majesty, which are thus happily marked by the epigrammatist [*t*].

[*s*] Εγγράφη του κεραυνοφόρου ούτως εναργώς και πεπερασμένως, ὥστε λεγέιν, ὅτι δύοιν Αλεξάνδρων, ὁ μὲν Φιλιππου γεγοιεν ἀνίκητος, ὁ δὲ Απελλου ἀμιμήτος. *De Fort. vel Virt. M. Alex.* p. 335. *Ed. Paris.*

[*t*] Ἀνδασυνῆι δ' εἰσκεν ὁ χαλκὸς εἰς Δία λευσσών·  
Γὰρ ὑπ' ἐμοὶ τίθεμαι, Ζεῦ, σὺ δ' ὀλυμποὶ ἐχέ.

*Let*

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*Let us divide, O Jove! the conqueror cries:*

*I lord of earth, thou, tyrant of the skies.*

A. WE must not expect such expressions as these from the pencil of Raphael; would you see him in his true character, observe where the angel turns our first parents out of paradise; it is plain, that he acts in obedience to a command; he lays his finger gently on the shoulder of Adam, and marks, by a certain tenderness of action, a compassion of their past weakness, and present misery. It is in tracing these slight and less obvious movements of the mind, that this amiable painter shows the true beauty of his genius; more excellent, perhaps, in expressing such feelings, in that he was not transported by the more violent. I have now brought you into the gallery of the Vatican; we must enter the apartments; though we have little to do there; for, of  
all

all the works of Raphael, these the most celebrated for the painting, are the least to be noted for expression. An assembly of Christian doctors, or of Heathen philosophers, are subjects of no motion. Heliodorus driven by angels out of the temple, promises expression; but his terror is a grimace. When the angel visits St. Peter in prison, we might reasonably expect, in the countenance and action of the saint, some kind of emotion; how do we find him? fast asleep; could Giotto have done less? In the action of Attila, indeed, there is somewhat of dignity and spirit; but it would distress the most sanguine admirers of Raphael, to produce, from this series of painting, such examples of the pathetic or sublime, as might entitle him to be ranked with the first painters of antiquity.

*B. I SHALL*

B. I SHALL excuse your entering on a particular examination of the history of Psyche, or the banquet of the gods; persuaded, that you would find the paintings at the palace Chigi, as destitute of the expressions you look for, as you have already found those of the Vatican. Yet we must acknowledge an uncommon energy and spirit in the flight of Mercury; and it has been observed, that the painter has, with wonderful art, given to Pluto, Neptune, and Jupiter, distinct characters, yet preserved in all a brotherly likeness.

A. It would have done more honour to his art, had he expressed in any one of them a great idea; the conceptions of Euphranor were very different on a like occasion; [u]

[u] Qui cum Athenis duodecim Deos pingeret, Neptuni imaginem quam poterat excellentissimis majestatis coloribus complexus est, perinde ac Jovis ali-



“ who, being employed at Athens, to paint  
 “ the twelve gods; expressed in Neptune  
 “ the highest idea of majesty, with a design  
 “ to make the Jupiter still more noble;  
 “ but having exhausted the force of his  
 “ imagination in the former character, he  
 “ could not rise in the latter to the point  
 “ which he ambitioned.” It will be easily  
 allowed, that the failure of Euphranor, was  
 more glorious, than the success of Raphael:  
 The first, hurried away by the impetuosity  
 of his genius, aims at a flight beyond the  
 reach of humanity: The second, secure in  
 the mildness of his spirit, hovers within the  
 circle of his calm conceptions. [x] We  
 may, according to Plutarch, be pleased by

*quanto augustiorem repræsentaturus; sed omni im-*  
*petu cogitationis in superiore opere absumpto, poste-*  
*riores ejus conatus assurgere quo tendebant, nequi-*  
*verant. Val. Max. lib. viii. c. 11.*

[x] Το μὲν γὰρ ἀσφαλὲς ἐπαινεῖσθαι μόνον, τὸ δὲ ἐπιμύ-  
 διον καὶ θαυμάζειν. Plut. de educat. liberorum.

the one, but the other excites our wonder and admiration.

*B.* SINCE we have had so little satisfaction, in the point of expression, from the paintings at the Vatican, and the palace Chigi, let us examine the designs, or, as they commonly are called, the cartons of Raphael. For, whatever share his scholars may have had in the execution, we can have no doubt, but that the compositions were taken wholly from his drawings.

*A.* If the errors in drawing, and inequalities in the several parts, mark, beyond a doubt, the pencil of the scholars; the variety and truth of the expressions prove, with equal force, both the hand and genius of the master. Let us trace the latter in Christ's charge to Peter; the keys are no sooner delivered, or the preference given, than we

N

perceive

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perceive the different effects manifest in the countenance and gestures of the several disciples : The two foremost approve the action ; the one, with the calmness of age and judgment, the other, with the eagerness of youth and passion. Of the two, which follow, the one has his eyes fixed earnestly on the face of Christ : The second, seems suspended between self-love and the justice of the choice. The remaining six are divided into two groupes ; in the former of which, the foremost figure, of a bilious and meager temperament, looks hastily for the agreement of the next to him ; who, of a quite different complexion, seems lost in a simple and implicit admiration : Whilst the third, piqued at their approbation, marks by an impatience in his looks, and a restlessness of action, how ill satisfied he is with the preference given to Peter. The last groupe consists, like the former, of three figures ;

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figures; the hindmost is, by a concealment of his countenance and action, withdrawn, as it were, from the scene. This gives a kind of repose to the imagination, and adds a spirit to the expressions in the other two; of whom, one, under a knit brow and forced compoſure, ſwells with a ſullen diſcontent; but the other, of a more active and fiery nature, breaks out into an open and un-governed expreſſion of envy. Upon the whole, if we conſider the ſimplicity of the ſubject, the variety and judicious conſtraiſts in the characters, the juſtneſs and delicacy in the expreſſions, we muſt confeſs, that, however unequal Raphael may be to the enthuſiaſm and pathetic of the antique, he is an abſolute maſter of the ſubordinate affections; and admirable, in tracing through middle life, the various and ſubtile workings of character. It would take up too much of our time, to go through the ſeveral in-

stances of the sagacity and conduct of this painter; yet one is so singular in its kind, that I cannot pass it in silence. When the inhabitants of Lystra are about to offer sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, it was necessary to let us into the cause of all the motion and hurry before us; accordingly, the cripple, whom they had miraculously healed, appears in the crowd: Observe the means which the painter has used, to distinguish this object, and, of course, to open the subject of his piece. His crutches, now useless, are thrown to the ground; his attitude is that of one accustomed to such a support, and still doubtful of his limbs; the eagerness, the impetuosity with which he solicits his benefactors, to accept the honours destined for them, point out his gratitude, and the occasion of it: During the time that he is thus busied, an elderly citizen, of some consequence by his appearance, draws near,  
and



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and lifting up the corner of his vest, surveys with astonishment the limb newly restored ; whilst a man of middle age, and a youth, looking over the shoulder of the cripple, are intent on the same object. The wit of man could not devise means more certain of the end proposed ; such a chain of circumstances is equal to a narration : And, I cannot but think, that the whole would have been an example of invention and conduct, even in the happiest age of antiquity.

*B.* You have at length done justice to our great modern ; and, it should seem to me, from the light you have thrown on this subject, that the true difference between the ancients and him, consists in this, that the former drew the passions to a point, collecting the powers of painting to one single and forcible expression ; whilst the genius of Raphael, more placid and diffused, illu-

mines and is reflected by numberless objects.

*A.* WE may add to your observation another reason why the paintings of the ancients had greater effect than those of the moderns; they possessed more parts: Let me explain myself. In order to have a just idea of the different parts of painting, we are obliged to study different masters; for colouring, Titian; for the clear obscure, Correggio; for design and composition, Raphael: It will not be denied, that, had the last of these, united to his own the excellencies of the other two, his works would have had more the air of truth; and (which is the end of all imitative arts) stood more naturally in the place of the things which they represent: It is this nearness to truth, or excellency in the mechanic, which imposes on our senses, and gives its powers to the ideal:  
Now,

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Now, I am inclined to believe, that the first painters of Greece were no less perfect in the one than in the other. I think we have proved this in Apelles and Parrhasius; Let us therefore suppose the merits of Titian, Correggio, and Raphael, united to the grace, beauty, and sublime of the antique, we shall then have an idea of consummate painting; and our imagination may bring before us, the Helen of Zeuxis, the Alexander of Apelles, and the Medea of Timomachus.

*B.* I HAVE heard it maintained by professors in the art, that it was impossible that any one person should excel in all the several branches of painting: affirming, that it was above the condition of humanity; and, that the time and labour bestowed on some, must always be at the expence and to the diminution of the others.

N 4

*A.* THIS

*A.* This recalls to my mind an image, I have somewhere met with, of a man, who, lying under a covering that is too short, no sooner secures his breast, but he must bare his feet; and this will be the event in both cases, where the genius or covering is scanty. But it will not be so, in men of quick and great abilities. I think we may prove this from the progress of Raphael. He no sooner saw the cartons of Michael Angelo, and Leonardo da Vinci, than he dropped, in a great measure, the dryness of his master Perrugino; and blending the boldness of the first, with his own delicacy, struck out a style of design more perfect than his model: In the same manner, and at the same time, his colouring was much improved by his imitation of Fran. Bartolomeo; his composition, by the ideas he caught from Massaccio; and the clear obscure of the

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the Florentine school, such as it was, he made his own. The misfortune of Raphael was, not that his genius was weak, but, that his examples were imperfect: The ease with which he surpassed these, shews, that he was equal to greater: Had he seen the tender carnation in the Venus of Titian; the enchantment of clear obscure in the nativity of Correggio; his ready and comprehensive spirit would soon have united them to his own design and composition: Of the last, he was in a great measure the inventor: it is no wonder then, as he died very young, that the best part of his life was employed in the improvement of them. But this was not the case with the greatest painters of antiquity: Apelles had all the advantages, which Raphael wanted; instead of Perugino, he had a Pamphilus to his master; he had excellent examples in each part of painting. In design, Phidias



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 and Polycletus; in colouring and the  
 clear obscure, Zeuxis and Parrhasius;  
 in composition, [z] the happy ideas of  
 the last, joined to the ingenuity of Timan-  
 thes: And, as incitements to his ambition,  
 the friendship of Alexander, the emulation  
 of Protogenes, the examples and counsels of  
 Praxiteles and Lyfippus.

*B.* WHATEVER might have been the re-  
 sult of these advantages; how excellent so  
 ever Apelles and his contemporaries, in giv-  
 ing the utmost beauty and energy to a single  
 idea; you will allow, that, in mixed and  
 varied compositions, Raphael is much their  
 superior; a merit, which in the eyes of ma-  
 ny critics, will counterbalance the sublime  
 and pathetic of the ancients.

*A.* I HAVE admitted, that it was much  
 the taste of the Greek painters, to rest the  
 merit of their compositions on a single cha-

[z] Τα Παρεσσις σοφισματα,

racter

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racter or expression. That they judged well in this; the agreement of all the writers of antiquity, in giving the preference to these works, sufficiently proves. No doubt, the noblest end of painting, is, by a sudden and powerful impression, to strike home on the passions: This will never be effected, in painting, by drawing the imagination through links of successive ideas. The children of Medea, we are told, were represented smiling at the dagger in their mother's hand; her fury, mixed with a pity of their innocence, has been fully described: Would you extend composition beyond this, you rather weaken than improve it; is it to be imagined, that a painter, capable of such expressions as these, could not have marked the subordinate emotions in a number of assistants? We have already taken notice, in the Iphigenia of Timanthes, of the Climax in the expressions; and of his singu-

lar ingenuity, in distinguishing his principal character; can we suppose this artist unequal to trace the gradations of envy in Christ's charge to Peter, or the different effects of Paul's sermon at Athens?

*B.* I MUST interrupt you a moment; you have affirmed, that in the pathetic, painting has little advantage from a climax in the ideas; yet, poetry and musick move the passions, by a quick and growing succession of impressions; the images of the one, and vibrations of the other, gentle at first, accumulate, and press upon us, with such an impetuous re-iteration, as bears all before it.

*A.* THIS progress is just inverted in painting; the whole production is at once before us; our attention is immediately fixed on the most interesting expression; when we  
have

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have studied, and felt the powers of this, we then, and not till then, descend to the examination of the inferior movements: Thus, when we enter into an assembly of women, should there be one amongst them of distinguished beauty, the eye dwells with constancy on her; and having taken in all her advantages, passes to a careless observation of the rest. It is evident, in both these cases, that the superior character acts with an intrinsic, and not a relative force.

*B.* But we may suppose a subject, in which there may be many capital expressions; for example, the slaughter of the innocents.

*A.* In this case, some one more happy would overbear the rest; or, should they be more justly dealt with, the equality of their pretensions, would weaken their several effects:

fects: At best, the time necessary to combine all the ideas and feelings peculiar to each, would destroy any effect, which might be hoped for, from the succession of their impressions; so that, each could act but as a separate picture; and this is the reason, why painting can never transport the imagination, or stimulate the sense, so powerfully as poetry or musick: [a] For, though

[a] When Venus appears to her son on the coast of Africk, beauty of person, grace of action, tenderness of expression, with all the aids of dress, attributes, and distinction of clear obscure, are by the painter urged in the same instant on the imagination. In poetry, these ideas are successive, and (which proves the advantage of painting) the more quickly they succeed, the more perfect is the description; I may add to this, that grace and beauty, strike more warmly on the sense, in their actual appearance, than by any images formed of them by words; so that, by as much as the real appearance would be superior to paint, by so much is paint in this particular superior to poetry.

But the poet has ample amends; he can renew and vary those impressions at will; he can lengthen out  
it



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it has greatly the advantage of either in the impression of the instant, as it unites more circumstances in that one point of time ; yet it falls short of both, in the quickness and power of repeating its ideas.

his action by a chain of the most interesting circumstances : He can do more ; he can call all the senses to his aid, and improve his pictures of beauty, by a voice tuned to a heavenly sweetness, or air breathing a divine fragrance. Dryden has marked the advantage of this coalition of the senses.

*The hearing gave new pleasure to the sight,  
And both to thought.*

Milton has insinuated the same in the following words, addressed by Adam to the angel, and, in the sweetness of his numbers, still breathes on our ears the angelic accents.

*For, while I sit with thee, I seem in heav'n,  
And sweeter thy discourse is to my ear  
Than fruits of palm-tree, pleasantest to thirst  
And hunger both.*

As to the second advantage I mentioned, every reader feels, how much the following idea adds to the beauty, and ascertains the divinity of Venus.

B. BUT

B. BUT, does not the very instance you have given, in the Iphigenia of Timanthes shew the advantage of a gradation in the expressions; and of course, contradict all that you have opposed to it?

A. HAD the passion of grief been actually expressed in the countenance of Agamemnon, the case would have been precisely as I stated it just now: But his face being hid, and his feelings left wholly to our imagination, our attention fixes first on those expressions, which are the objects of sense, and rises from the real to a conception of the

*" Ambrosiæque comæ divinum vertice odorem*

*" Spiravere.*

The same effect is sensible in Milton's description of the angel Raphael, alighting on the earth.

*Like Maia's son he stood;*

*And shook his plumes, that heavenly fragrance filled*

*The circuit wide.*

ima-

imaginary. Now this, you see, is not a matter of expression, but a stroke of ingenuity ; which, as well as all the delicate, and less observable motions of the mind, are often found to owe their evidence and force to their associate ideas. Thus, tho' in addresses to the passions, the ancients, intent on giving the utmost force to the primary idea, made use of but few accessories ; they observed a quite different method, when the address was to the imagination. What spirit ; what variety ? what a fund of invention, in the marriage of Alexander and Roxana, as painted by Aëtion, and described by Lucian ? The playful and wanton compositions of Albani, are but roses pulled from this tree. We find in the same author, the description of the Centaur of Zeuxis : How excellent in the mechanic ? what novelty, what boldness in the ideal ? Let such traits of genius be the character-

istic of the antique ; I shall not dispute with those, who admire the picturesque disposition, the multiplied characters, and labour-ed compositions of the moderns.

*B.* I FIND, these last have in you but a false friend ; you joined their party just now, in the praise you gave to Raphael, only to turn upon them with more violence, when the occasion offered.

*A.* I AM a sincere admirer of the sagacity and resources of Raphael ; but I am more moved by one great expression, than by several minute ones. There is generally, in these last, something equivocal and undecisive ; they are often made out more, by the imagination of the beholders, than by the pencil of the painter : To some, they convey imperfect ideas ; to others, different. I hardly have known any two agree  
in

in the sentiments which they imputed to the several auditors of St. Paul. I attempted just now a history of the feelings of the disciples, on the preference given to Peter; some are obvious; but it is possible you may differ from me in many others. At best, they must be studied to be understood; this weakens and subdivides the effect: It is not so in the pathetic, or sublime. In the dying mother of Aristides, the Medea of Timomachus, the Alexander of Apelles, the ideas are manifest; the expressions decisive; and, we can no more confound, than we can forget, the effects which they produce——

*B. BUT,* granting that the chief merit of the arts should, as you say, consist in great or forcible expressions, are not instances of these to be found in modern painting?

O 2 *A. HAD*



*A.* HAD I known of any comparable to those, which I have quoted from the antique, they should certainly have had the preference; for whatever might have given occasion to these discourses, my design was, much more, to settle our ideas of the art, than the pretensions of the artists.

*B.* MAY it not be objected, that these advantages, which you have supposed on the side of the ancients, might have existed more in the descriptions, than in the works themselves?

*A.* WHEN any work can be produced of modern art, equal, in the sublime, to the Apollo; in expression, to the Laocoon; in grace and beauty, to the daughter of Niobe; I shall allow the force of this objection. With regard to these, as I have already

ready

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ready observed, the cause of painting and statuary is the same. As to composition, the grand point is expression; colouring and the clear obscure are proper to paint; how far the ancients excelled in these, exclusive of all other proofs, might be presumed from their superior genius, and indefatigable application. And now, I hope you have received, from this inquiry, the satisfaction I promised you at our first setting out. Our pursuit has not been altogether technical; a fine idea, whether it be conveyed in colours or words, tends equally to improve and enlighten the imagination; and, you cannot but have observed all along, a constant and pleasing resemblance, in the conceptions of the Greek artists, to those of their poets. The same style of greatness, the same strokes of tenderness, the same vein of elegance and simplicity shine through and beautify their works.

B. THIS

*B.* THIS may well be expected from the known analogy in the operations and powers of the two arts: Hence it is, that we can with justness transfer from one to the other the terms proper to each; and, as poetry is often but the colouring of words, so painting may be styled the eloquence of colours.

*A.* THE lively and natural effects of painting, are in nothing more sensible, than in the delight the poets take, in borrowing their images and metaphors from her. Hence they learn to groupe and arrange their objects; to shade and illumine their figures; to draw the outlines of grace; to lay on the tints of beauty; and all the colouring of words brightens as from the touches of the pencil. This correspondence prevails, not only in what relates to

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description,

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description, but even in the very essentials of each art. Was I to observe, that there were grace and beauty in the persons ; justness in the sentiments ; warmth and spirit in the passions ; I at once describe a good poem, or a good picture. As it is the character of fine writing, so it is of excellent painting, that the thoughts should be natural, not obvious ; elegant, not remote. [b] A Greek artist, having painted a naval engagement on the river Nile, it was necessary to mark the scene of action ; to this end, he represented an ass feeding on its bank, beneath which was couched a crocodile, ready to spring upon his prey. A modern would have planted at one end a river god, with water issuing from seven urns ; and this, with no small conceit of his erudition. The same simplicity and happiness of invention are attributed in gene-

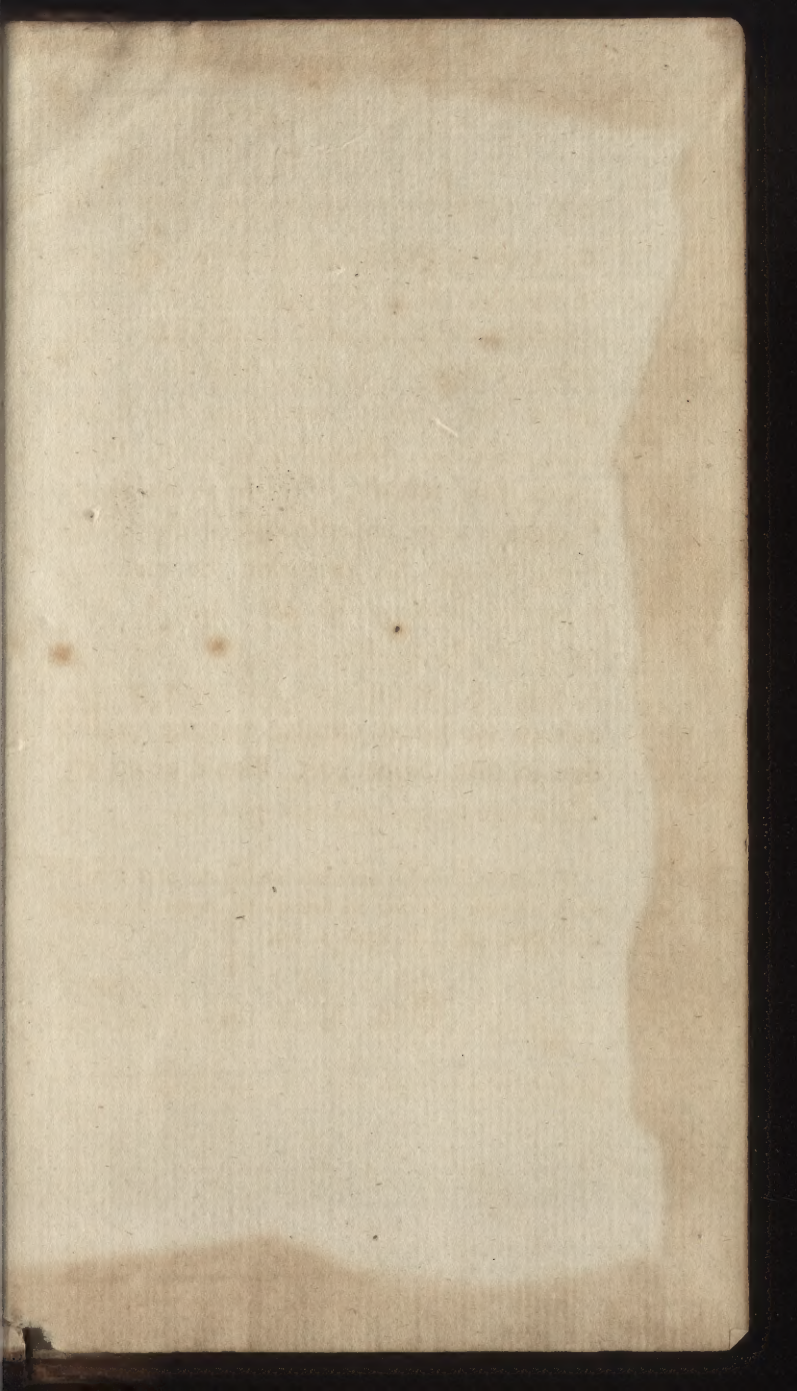
[b] Neaces, ingeniosus et solers in arte. Plin. lib. xxxv. c. 12.

ral to the paintings of Timanthes; in one of which, he represented, in a little picture, a cyclops sleeping, and, to give an extraordinary idea of his size, near him were drawn some satyrs, measuring his finger with a thyrsus. On which occasion, Pliny makes this remark, “[c] In all his works “there is more understood than expressed; “and though his execution be masterly, “yet his ideas exceed it.” This is, in so many words, a description of the poetry of Virgil. A circumstance, extremely favourable to the Greek artists, that the praises due to that divine poet, should be no less applicable to this excellent painter.

[c] In omnibus ejus operibus intelligitur plus semper quam pingitur; et cum ars summa sit, ingenium tamen ultra artem est. Lib. xxxv. c. 10.

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